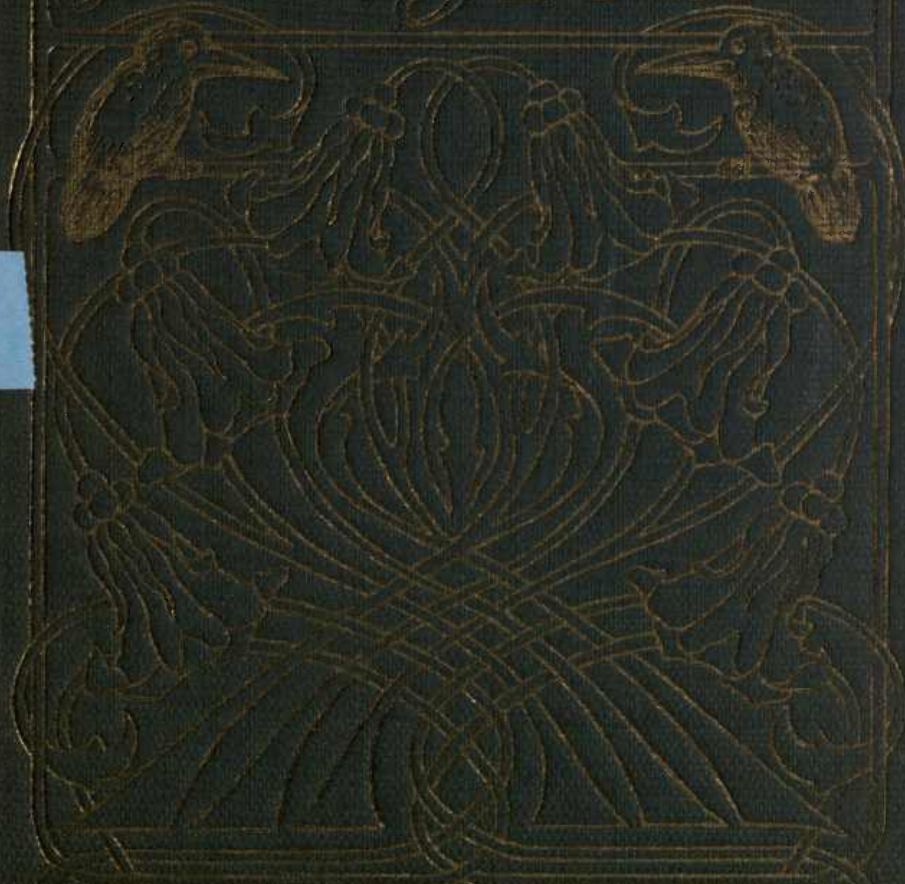
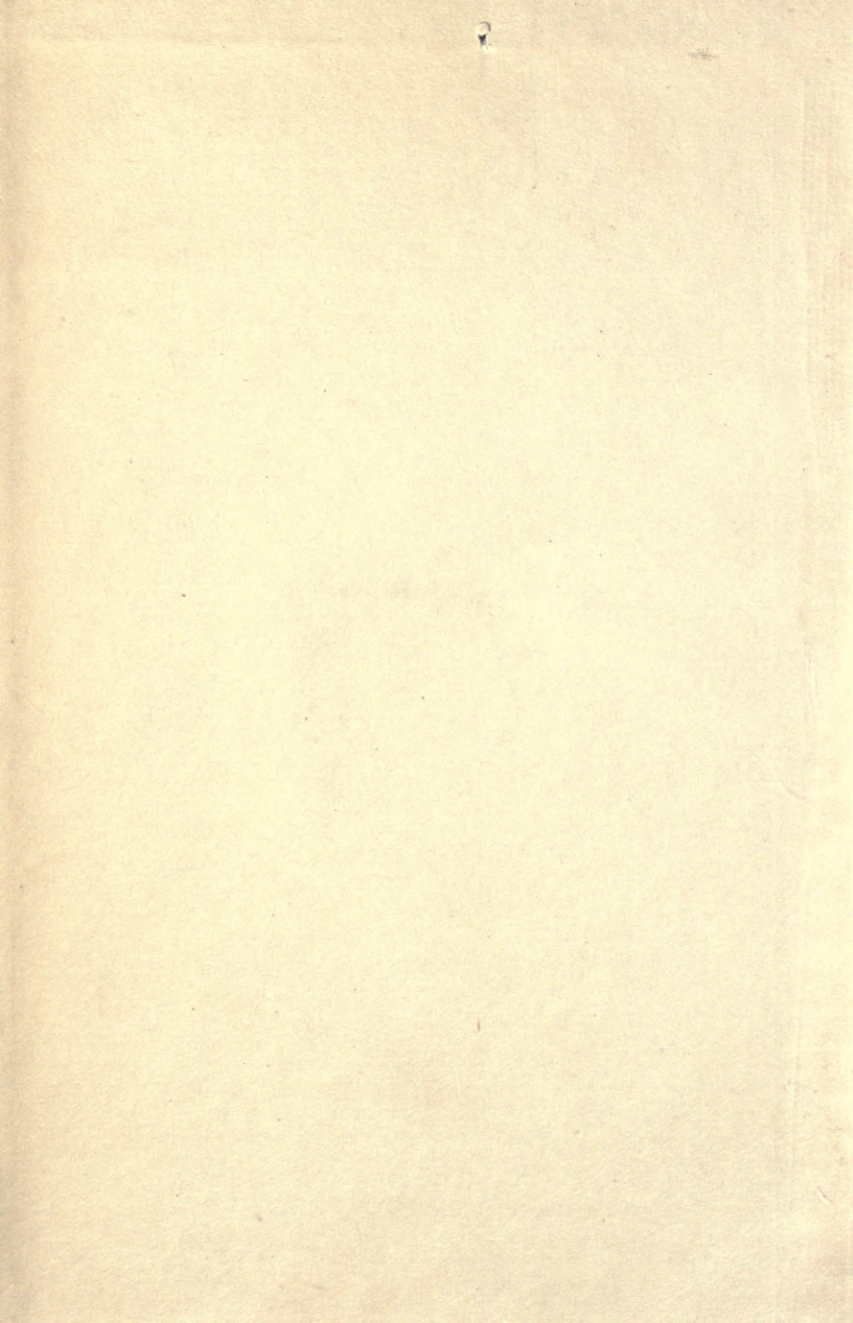


The Flint Heart



Eden Phillpotts



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THE FLINT HEART

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The exact shape of a bright black heart

THE FLINT HEART

A FAIRY STORY

BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

WITH SIXTEEN FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY CHARLES FOLKARD



NEW YORK
E·P·DUTTON & COMPANY
31 West Twenty-Third Street

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THE FLINT HEART

THE FLINT HEART

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY MAN

Very many years ago—perhaps five thousand, perhaps more—there was a wonderful and a busy people swarming all over Dartmoor. And if you don't know where Dartmoor is, get your map of England, and you'll find it in Devonshire. Some day, if you happen to be lucky, you may go there for a holiday, and then I can promise you a mighty treat. But you won't see exactly what I'm going to show you now, because the folk who begin this story have all vanished and their houses have nearly all vanished too.

They lived in the New Stone Age, and if you think that sounds dull, you never made

a bigger mistake in your life. It was the liveliest age before history. In fact, nobody ever had a dull moment.

Both the New Stoners and the Old Stoners too have long since rolled away; but when you go to Dartmoor you will see what they left behind them in the shape of hundreds and hundreds of other stones. Some stand in circles, and some stand in rows, and some stand all alone; but you will mark in a moment, if your eyes are worth calling eyes, that these stones never happened by chance. They are very different from the tors and "clitters" and rock masses which are flung about all over Dartmoor, as if the giants had been having a battle there and tried to find who could fling the biggest lump at his enemy.

If you had seen the Moor when the New Stoners lived on it, you would have noticed strange little villages of very quaint-looking round huts, like giant beehives in clusters. And about them stood walls, and little folds for cattle, and circles of stones dotted in

rings, where perhaps the Houses of Parliament met to fling more stones at each other. You will see also long rows of stones stretching far away to lonely spots on distant tors, where the great warriors and chiefs were buried.

You know these people had never heard of metal, and so used nothing but stones. Therefore we call their days the "Stone Age." We can't exactly say that they were "behind the times"; but they were a good deal before them; which is quite as bad, if not worse, because they could not even produce a packet of pins, or a tintack, or a darning needle. Metal had not yet been discovered by them. They knew not that there were such things as tin, or iron, or gold, or silver, or copper, or lead. Dartmoor was full of good useful tin under their very feet; the rivers were full of tin also; but they did not guess that, and they went on painfully hammering away at the stones and doing the best they could with the granite of the Moor and the splinters of flint, which they

brought from far off and chipped into arrow-heads and scrapers and spear-heads, and many other useful things.

They lived in the beehive huts, and these were fairly cosy during the winter, but in summer-time must have been rather stuffy. Their homes were made of huge stones arranged in rings and planted tight together and padded with peat. The roof was built up of the skins of wild beasts stretched on sticks, but a hole was left for the smoke of the fire to get out; and there was another hole in the side of each hut to let the New Stoners get in. They had no doors, but crawled in on hands and knees, and then lowered a leathern curtain to keep the cold from coming in after them.

The fire burnt in the middle of each hut; and when the day's work was done, and the hunting or fighting over and the children put to bed, the grown-up folk would assemble round their fires; and the men would make spears, and the women would darn the men's leathern shirts with fishbone needles, or do

fancy work, using bears' claws or wolves' teeth instead of beads. Then they would talk of the times and shake their heads; for I can tell you the times were pretty hard, as you would expect them to be in an Age of Stone. Not that they knew how badly they were off. On the contrary, they always thought the best times were gone, and had not the slightest idea that they were yet to come. And the old people all said, "Ah! ah! for the good Old Stoners and their fine days before the world went so fast and was so full of strange novel-ties!" But the young people said, "Oh! oh! you ancient white-headed sticks-in-the-mud, we refuse to believe any time was better than these merry days of the New Stoners." Which was rude; but exactly the same thing is going on still. For the old people believe in the old times, and the middle-aged people believe in the middle-aged times, and the young people believe in the present times, especially if they happen to be holiday times. But hardly anybody believes in the

future times. Yet, for my part, though I sha'n't be there, I believe in them with all my might, and feel sure that they will be more splendid than any times we have ever had yet. And I hope you will live long enough to see them arrive. As for the New Stoners, the Bronze men ran into them while they were still whining about the good old times; and then they very soon forgot what it felt like to have nothing but stone to work with, and wondered how anybody had ever managed to get on without metal.

The arrival of the first pin was one of the greatest events in Dartmoor history. It came in a ship to Plymouth, and a great chief had it as a present on his jubilee. But the great chief's wife very soon got it out of him, and the first New Stoner to be pricked with it was the great chief's wife's boy baby, while he was being logged in his wolf-skin cradle by the great chief's wife's baby's nurse.

But from that pin to an arrow-head was but a matter of a moment; and then followed

daggers and helmets and targets, and hair-pins and safety-pins and hat-pins, and buttons and fire-irons and frying-pans, and toasting forks and ploughshares and pruning-hooks and, in fact, all the blessings of civilisation that could be hoped for until those two noisy things, printing and gunpowder, were invented.

AND NOW,

after all this talk, the story begins.

There was once a New Stoner whose name was Brokotoctocktick, and there was another New Stoner whose name was merely Fum. Brokotoctocktick—we will call him Brok for short, as most people did behind his back, though he wouldn't have liked it—was a fighter; and Fum was a man of mystery. They belonged to a tribe which lived in a village called Grimspound, under Hameldon in the middle of Dartmoor; and the tribe was a very important one, and Brok and Fum were the most important people in it. Brokotoctocktick—whose name sounds to me more like the

cuckoo clock out of order than anything sensible—was the head-man of the clan, and a warrior of high renown, and Fum was a good many things rolled into one. He was the Lord Chancellor to begin with, and he was the Lord Chief Justice too. He was also the only doctor in the tribe; and, as if all that was not enough, during his spare time he made poetry and manufactured charms to keep off the Bugaboos. There are no Bugaboos on Dartmoor now, but there were once. They vanished away with the Stone Age. And Fum knew all about the Bugaboos, and could furnish charms for catching them or keeping them off. The brave New Stoners liked one charm; the timid New Stoners preferred the other. Fum was paid in sheep and cattle for his charms. Probably the sheep weren't quite as good as our prize Dartmoors nowadays; but mutton was mutton even then, and the mystery man loved nothing better than a good chump chop. Therefore, when people wanted his charms they always brought a live sheep; and if they

wanted something extra strong they had to bring two. Then Fum would make the charm, and often, if he was feeling cheerful and amiable, he would keep the customer and recite one of his finest pieces of poetry.

These sagas, or sayings, of Fum's were very well thought of in those days, and if the New Stoners had known how to make books he might have done well and sold his poems, nicely bound in wolf-skin or bear-skin, for at least a shoulder of lamb a copy; but it was a dark prehistoric age, and the great idea had not struck him. He merely learned his own poems by heart and recited them for his friends; which, after all, is the best way to publish, if your friends are patient and kind.

Some poets before Fum's time lifted up their voices and sang. And the first New Stoner who sang made everybody jump, I can tell you. In fact, he was so amazing, and so wonderful, and so unlike everybody else, that they took him out to the top of a high hill and chopped his head off with a flint axe—just

for a warning to other people not to be too clever. But the second poet who found that he could sing was cleverer still, and he told the people exactly what he was going to do before he began. So they were ready for him and didn't jump, and thought it was beautiful. In fact, they made a tremendous fuss about him and bragged about him to other New Stone tribes who had no singers. Which shows that you may do anything new in reason, so long as you don't make people jump too much, but give them fair warning.

And this is the end of the first chapter. There is no special reason why it should be; but it looks about long enough, and I like to keep my chapters fairly short, because the long ones get puffed up and sneer at the little ones, though often the little ones are much the best and the long ones are frightfully dull. Of course, in this book about the wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten Flint Heart there must not be a single dull chapter, if I can help it. And if you find one, please write me and tell

me which it is. Then I shall soon look after it, and may even drop it out of the story altogether, if it does not try to improve and brighten itself up.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE CHARM

Fum had his charm shop some way from the village, and often hid himself there for days at a time; because it is no good being a man of mystery if you don't keep it up and do mysterious things. So he built a special hut down by the river Dart at a place called Postbridge, and he went there twice a week to make charms. And if there were a lot of charms on hand and not much for the Lord Chancellor to do, and not much for the doctor, he went down to Postbridge three times a week and hid there, and nobody was admitted except on business. All his charms were made of flint, for remember always that this was the Stone Age.

Fum got these flints from a long way off, and then, with an immense deal of time and

patience, he hammered away at them and chipped and chipped and chipped them into arrow-heads and spear-heads and other useful and necessary things. But the charms that he made fetched more mutton than the other articles, and were really easier to make too; though Fum never told anybody that. On the contrary, he pretended that they were fearfully difficult, and declared that he could only make them at certain times when the Thunder Spirit was with him. People thought this was mystery; but as a matter of fact it was merely business.

Fum sat one day chipping a flint brooch for Mrs. Brokotockotick, the chief's wife, when there came to him a young warrior of the clan called Phuttphutt. He was a tall strong New Stoner, with black hair, and he wore a brown bear-skin round his body and a look of great discontent upon his face. He had nothing else on at all, except one heron's feather stuck behind his ear. This was not a pen, but an order or distinction—the order of the G.H.F.

or Grey Heron Feather. It was a military order, and could only be won by a soldier who had slain fifty enemies with his own hand.

"Good morning, Fum," said Phuttphutt. "I know there is no admittance here except on business; but I have come on business. I want an expensive and important charm."

"Sit down and tell me about it," answered Fum. He dropped his tools, pushed away the brooch for Mrs. Brok—it was not going on too well, and promised to be one of his failures—got up from his work-table, which was an old tree-stump, and stretched his arms and legs.

"The position is this," began Phutt. We can leave out the rest of his name except on State occasions. "I want to know why Brok-tockotick is the chieftain of this tribe. I want to know why he should lord it over a man like me. I want to know if I shouldn't make quite as good a chief as he does; and I also want to know how to set about becoming chief in his place."

"You want to know a lot of things," answered Fum.

"I do," admitted Phutt. "Take an instance. You remember that in the great battle with the tribe on the other side of the river I killed fourteen men and wounded ten more."

"You did," admitted Fum, "and I proposed and seconded the vote of thanks in the House of Parliament."

"Well, you will recollect that among other rare spoils I took with my own hands, when the survivors of the beaten tribe ran for their lives, there were a white mole-skin war-waistcoat from the body of the chief and a silver fox-skin petticoat the property of the chief's wife?"

"Quite true."

"And they were the most wonderful and beautiful things in the whole lodge, and naturally I thought I ought to have the war-waistcoat and my wife ought to have the silver-fox petticoat. Yet who wear them now?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Brokotockotick wear them," answered Fum.

"Exactly. He took them away. He said they were his by right. He grabbed all the best things and left me all the second best. And what I want to know is, why?"

"Because he was the stronger."

"Not at all," said Phutt. "I am stronger, I am younger; and my muscles are bigger. I am a G.H.F. as well as him. In the last battle he only killed seven men and a boy. That shows I'm a better warrior than Brok."

"A better warrior, perhaps; but not a stronger man. Your grammar is bad too. He's harder-hearted; he's got a more powerful will. He was born to rule; you were not. If you want to be at the top of the tree in this tribe you've got to be as hard-hearted as a wolf. That's where he beats you—you're too soft, my boy."

Phutt thought about this.

"You're right," he said. "Well, then, you know the sort of charm I must have. Give me a hard heart, Fum—the harder the better."

The man of mystery was a good deal older



“Look!” Fum said, “the Spirit of the Thunder!”

than Phutt, and his own heart was not very hard.

"It can be done," he answered; "but think twice."

"If it can be done, do it," said Phutt.

Fum shook his head.

"If this is done, there will be no more peace in the tribe till you have become chief."

"It won't take long if your charm is strong enough," answered Phutt, G.H.F. "You know how hard Brok's heart is; then you've only got to make mine twice as hard and—"

"But there's another side," explained Fum. "It's true you'll be chief, but you'll very likely lose the affection of the tribe. Brok is the head-man, but he isn't the favourite man. They don't shout for him as they do for you. The children don't weave garlands of foxgloves for him as they do for you. The women don't make him slippers or necklaces of wolf's teeth, as they do for you."

"Bah!" cried Phutt, "who wants the children bothering round him, or necklaces of wolf's

teeth? Give me my white mole-skin war-waistcoat and unlimited power."

Still Fum, who was a great lover of peace, as all the best mystery men are, tried to change Phutt's mind; but the young warrior was firm. Then the charm-maker thought of a way out of the difficulty.

"As a matter of fact, such a thing as you want would be frightfully expensive," he said.

"How much?" asked Phutt.

"Oh, far more than you could pay."

"How much?" repeated Phutt.

"It would take the chief himself to pay it, I assure you."

"How much?"

Thus driven into a corner, Fum had to answer, and he made the price ridiculously high.

"Thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs," he said.

Then he heaved a sigh of relief, for he felt pretty sure that Phutt would not, even if he could, pay such a price as that.

The other considered, and Fum tried yet again to influence him.

"What's the use?" he continued. "What's the good of a hard heart, even if you've got one? A soft heart wins much pleasanter things; and to be head of a tribe like this is not at all a pleasant thing. Look here, I'll give you a very fine charm for catching white moles, and then you'll soon be able to get your wife to make you a white mole-skin war-waistcoat of your own. And it will be a new one, and no doubt fit you much better than the other."

But Phutt was not listening.

"This charm will make my heart just twice as hard as Brok's?" he asked.

"It will; and so you'll have just twice as many difficulties as Brok."

"And I shall be just twice as well able to tackle them."

Then Phutt, who was no hand at figures, asked Fum to show him exactly how many thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs would be, and Fum arranged thirty-two big lumps

of flint for the sheep and thirty-two little ones for the lambs.

"I'll call again the day after to-morrow," said Phutt, "and then I'll see if I can pay you."

He put all the stones into a leather bag and went off to his flock of sheep, which lived outside the main great wall of Grimspound village, and were driven inside at night and tended by a shepherd. Then he made the shepherd drive the sheep in a row before him, and he put down a flint stone as each passed. He found when they had all gone by that there were no flints left. Therefore his total flock just sufficed to pay Fum for the promised charm.

Phutt was well pleased at this and, according to his promise, visited Fum again on the following day.

"I find," said he, "that I can pay for the charm, so you may set about it. Here are your flint stones back. I have got exactly as many sheep and lambs as there are stones in this bag."

"Remember," said Fum, "you will be left without any at all."

But Phutt only laughed at that.

"You're not such a very clever man as you make out, it seems to me," he answered. "Why, when my heart turns hard, I shall jolly soon have as many sheep as I want, and as many cows too, not to mention as many of everything else."

"True," said Fum. "I had overlooked that."

"When shall I have the charm?" asked Phutt.

"As soon as I can make it. In a month, if all goes well. But flint is an unkind stone—you never know if it will split right or wrong."

"In a month, then, I shall return," said Phutt; "and on the day the charm is handed to me my sheep shall be driven into your fold."

Off he went, and Fum took a stone there and then and began to give it a few rough preliminary blows. But, at the very first stroke, a remarkable thing happened. The stone

broke into three pieces, and the middle piece was in the exact shape of a bright black heart with a hole in it. Of course, Fum couldn't believe his eyes. But there was no mistaking the object. He had earned thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs at a single blow! Still he knew right well that such a thing had not happened by chance. He was aware that the great and powerful and much-to-be-dreaded Spirit of the Thunder had helped him.

Now the Spirit of the Thunder is as mischievous and far more wicked than a school-boy. He had played Fum some strange tricks before, and on this occasion, greatly though he loved a chop, or a nice saddle of mutton with rowanberry jelly, yet the mystery man would gladly have given up his bargain and thrown the Flint Heart into the river rather than hand it to Phutt. But he dared not do any such thing, because he knew that the Thunder Spirit had helped him; and to have any difference with the Spirit of the Thunder was quite out of the question

in New Stone days. The Spirit of the Thunder talks Death, and every word of his language is strong enough to burn up even a mystery man. Fum remembered the last mystery man and what became of him only too well. He was called Sminth, and he quarrelled with the Spirit of the Thunder; and when the Spirit answered back, all that was left of Sminth was a little bit of charcoal about half the size of a cocoanut. You see, the Spirit of the Thunder always will have the last word.

So, taking one thing with another, Fum felt that the responsibility must rest with the Spirit of the Thunder, and he went to his door and called after Phutt.

The whole making of the Heart had occupied but one minute and thirty seconds, and Phutt was still within earshot. Therefore he heard and returned.

His surprise at seeing the Heart was very considerable, and he felt suspicious and inclined to doubt if Fum had fairly earned his flock.

“You may take it or leave it, and I wish you’d leave it,” said the mystery man. “I don’t want you to have it. And as sure as my name is Fum, you’ll repent it.”

But Phutt thought not. He and Fum took hands and walked round and round the Flint Heart, and Fum lifted up his light baritone voice, and sang a song, and Phutt, who was a tenor, replied, also in verse; because a New Stoner’s bargain was always ratified in that manner. These are their words, done into modern English, and, I regret to say, quite spoiled in translation.

Fum began:

“By the Spirit of the Thunder, do not take this
direful charm,
So deadly and so dangerous, so full of hidden
harm.
Oh, change your mind; be good and kind
As you were wont to be;
Your family, dear Phutt, I know,
Will much regret to see
A husband and a father dear
Abandon love and rule by fear.”

But Phutt would not take the hint, though Fum sang beautifully, and there were tears in his voice and even in his eyes as he danced round and round.

The young warrior shook his head, cleared his throat, and answered thus:

“ This black flint heart I welcome ; it shall hang
 upon my vest ;
For Stoners New a hard flint heart, believe
 me, Fum, is best.
A chip of night,
A charm of might
To startle and surprise,
To frighten men and women all
And make them rub their eyes.
For Phutt shall ever reign by fear —
Oh, Spirit of the Thunder, hear ! ”

They danced round eighteen times, which the occasion demanded, because eighteen is the magical New Stone number. Then they stopped and Fum dried his eyes, and Phutt, stringing the Flint Heart on a leather bootlace, hung it round his neck and went to look at himself in a pool of water. But he didn't see

himself reflected there. Instead he was rather alarmed to observe gazing up at him a dark, terrible, and wonderful phantom. This phantom was not exactly ugly—indeed, some people might have admired it; but it was solemn and strange, and its eyes were the copper-colour of the sky before storm, and its hair was the lightning, twisted, tangled, tormented over its forehead into a fury of fire. You never saw such lovely hair—all rose and blue and dazzling flame-colour.

Phutt started back and looked aloft, and saw in the sky the amazing and terrific shape that had thrown this picture into the pool.

Fum was not so much astonished, because he had met the wonder before.

“Look!” he said, “the Spirit of the Thunder! Hark! It speaks!”

Out of the darkened zenith, where the dazzling diamond-bright arch of the Spirit’s hair made the daylight wan, there came a peal of many thunders. The awful music rang and rattled and roared; and the rocky hills caught

the noise and flung it backwards and forwards among them.

"Now you've done it!" said Fum; "I wouldn't be you for all the sheep on Dartmoor."

But Phutt was not alarmed after the first shock. He looked up quite calmly and smiled and nodded.

"That's all right, Thunder Spirit," he said. "We're not deaf!"

Of course, to be rude to the Thunder Spirit may have been rather brave of Phutt, but it was also rather foolish, and Fum felt exceedingly uneasy. He feared, indeed, that this rash young New Stoner would instantly be swept away by a flash of lightning for his pains. The Thunder Spirit, however, did nothing. He had a true sense of humour, and the idea of this human atom talking to him so cheekily much amused the great being. So he broke out into a rattling peal of laughter that shook Dartmoor to the roots and knocked the upper storeys off seven of the highest tors; then he gathered his garment of sooty cloud

about him and drew the cowl of the rain over his glittering hair and swept away in tempest and darkness.

After he had gone the sky turned blue again; but it was not nearly so blue as Fum.

The man of mystery went back into his workshop and picked up Mrs. Brok's brooch; while Phutt, eager to test the power of the Flint Heart, made all haste to return to Grimpound.

On the way he met three different beasts, and considered that this accident was a good omen.

The first was a deer, and he slew it and said, "Good, I shall have the swiftness of the deer."

The second was a bear, and he slew it and said, "Better, I shall have the strength of a bear."

The third was a fox, and he slew it and said, "Best, I shall have the cunning of the fox!"

And so he came back to Grimpound.

CHAPTER III

THE REIGN OF PHUTT

At the great entrance in the main wall that ran all round the village three children were sitting in the road playing at knuckle-bones. Their hair was black and their eyes were black, and their mouths were purple because they had all been eating whortleberries. They wore no clothes, and their little bodies were hard and strong and their little muscles were coming on well. They laughed at Phutt as he approached, and asked him to come and join the game; but they didn't laugh twice, because Phutt told them to get out of his way, and before they had time to do so he kicked them out. The infant New Stoners flew in one direction; their knuckle-bones flew in another. A woman standing by thought that she must be in a nightmare to see such a horrid sight; but

after she had pulled her pigtail to prove that she was awake, she ran screaming down the high street of Grimpound and let it be known that the great warrior Phutt had gone mad and was killing the children at the gate. Then the father of the children hastened out and met Phutt, and used some rather strong New Stone words, such as "Spzflutz" and "Bbjkfjiuk" and "Bubblexg," which we have lost the art of pronouncing (if it can be considered a loss); and when he had done Phutt took his flint-headed axe and hit the father of the family on the head with it, so that he fell down and died upon the spot. There was really no arguing with Phutt now.

Of course, during those days people were naturally a little more prickly than they are in the twentieth century; but even for a man who had missed going to school Phutt went too far. To question his judgment meant a broken jaw or a dig in the pit of the stomach that would have settled anybody but a Stone Man on the spot; while those unwise members

of the clan who openly differed from him found their heads cloven in twain before they could take their hats off.

Mrs. Phutt very properly sided with her husband. She felt that it was only right and respectable to sink or swim with him, whatever he did; but the thirteen little Phutts, as children will, refused to hide their private opinions of the change that had come over daddy. They howled if he looked at them, and ran for protection to the great, lean, wolfish sheep-dogs that guarded the folds by night.

But after Phutt had talked to the sheep-dogs even they went in fear, and the moment they heard his voice they put their tails between their legs and bent their heads and bristled and growled and showed their teeth and skulked with glimmering red-hot eyes away.

Then, after three days of this sort of thing, the tribe sent a deputation to their chief begging that the head of Phutt might be taken off as quickly as possible in the interests of peace and progress. The man of mystery, Fum him-

self, composed the petition; but even he trembled a little when he delivered it before Brok, because nobody had been more surprised than Fum to find what a frightfully strong charm it was that he had managed to make for Phutt.

The big men of the tribe—all that were left, for Phutt had killed a good many—went in a procession to Broktockotick and pushed Fum forward. They had chosen an afternoon when Phutt was from home killing bears; and Fum rather gabbled the petition, for, like everybody else, he was in a terrible fright that Phutt would return before any plans could be made.

“May it please your gracious Goodness, we, the loyal and faithful people of the loyal and faithful city of Grimspound, do implore and beseech and beg and entreat your genial Mightiness to restrain, sit on, squash, squelch, and otherwise smash that high and mighty and far-too-much-puffed-up person known as Phutt for shortness, whose real name is Phuttphutt, from—”

“Take breath,” said the chief. “There is no hurry, my dear Fum. I am disengaged until supper-time. These legal forms of speech are exceptionally trying to a stout and short-winded gentleman like yourself, because of the lack of stops.”

Which shows what a wise, considerate, and reasonable person Brok was for those days.

Fum thanked him, and the rest applauded with their eyes nervously turned to the gate. But Phutt was not yet in sight.

“We therefore beg, implore, beseech, and also pray that it may please your cheerful and kind-hearted Amiability to stand between us and the awful severity of Phutt, and we may add that he has destroyed many of your Kingship’s subjects and fighting men and—”

“He’s coming, he’s coming!” cried several of the older warriors. They were very ancient, and their hair was white, and their nerves were not what they had been. Now their knees knocked together, and they exhibited all the worst signs of funk.

"The sooner he comes the better," said Brok. "What I hear annoys me very much. It is quite wrong, and not at all nice of him. Are there not plenty of our enemies to kill, if he wants to kill people? I don't like this loose way we are falling into of killing one another without a proper reason. It isn't gentlemanly, and it isn't a good example for the children. What's more, I won't have it. Tell him to come here and stand in front of me."

"I regret to say that he won't be ordered," explained Fum. "Only yesterday two courageous people tactfully hinted to Phutt that his conduct threw him open to criticism. His reply was to cut them both in half across the middle—like two packs of cards."

"Then it is time for me to act," declared the chief. "Phutt must be cautioned, and if it happens again he shall be punished."

The great Brok rose off his granite throne, hitched his robes about him, and sent a boy for his crown. The robes were made of black bear-skins, dotted with white rabbits' tails; and

nobody but Brok might wear this quaint and pleasing raiment under pain of death; because it was the recognised garment of the chief. Brok's crown was made of kingfishers' feathers, and it gave him quite a stylish look, though he wore it rather farther on the back of his head than crowns are worn now. That, however, is a matter of taste, which did not detract from Brok's regal appearance in the eyes of his subjects.

As Phutt wouldn't come to him, Brok, with true philosophy, sent for his chair of State and went to Phutt. Four New Stoners carried the chair, and the entire population of men, women, children, dogs, and perambulators came behind.

The bold Phutt stood at his door eating a piece of cake for his tea. Close at hand Mrs. Phutt was skinning the bear which her husband had brought home on his shoulders.

"Good afternoon, Phutt," said Brok.

"Afternoon," said Phutt, with his mouth full.

"You're having your tea, I observe," said Brok very politely.

"You observe right," answered Phutt.

"Does it occur to you that a good many other brave men would also be having their teas at this moment if you had not slain them?" asked the chief.

"Pooh! Don't be sentimental!" answered Phutt.

Then he went on with his cake.

Brok took off his crown and scratched his head. It was a natural, if not a kingly, action. The silence was almost painful. You could have heard anybody wink.

"Am I your chief, or am I not?" asked Brok calmly.

"You are not," answered Phutt.

"Then you stand convicted of treason to the throne," replied Brok; "and you know what the punishment for *that* is."

Brok began to get angry, for the scorn and insolence in Phutt's eye was hard to bear.

"Who took my white mole-skin war-waist-

coat and silver-fox petticoat?" asked Phutt passionately.

He had finished his tea, and his fingers were playing with the edge of his terrible flint axe.

"They were not yours," answered Brok. "The spoils of a slain chief belong to the victorious chief and nobody else. As a matter of fact, I may tell you that the moth has got into the war-waistcoat rather badly."

"That is neither here nor there," answered Phutt. "What I say is that I deny your right to the chieftainship of this clan; and, in fact, I claim it for myself."

"Perhaps you'll tell me why," suggested Brok.

"Because I'm stronger and bigger and younger and a better manager," said Phutt.

"You may be," answered Brok, "though I'm not prepared to admit all that. But, as I am chief, and these gentlemen and ladies are perfectly satisfied with the way I and my wife manage things, it ill becomes you to talk this nonsense. You are in a minority of one."

“So be it,” returned Phutt. “Then who will join the minority?”

None answered, and the intrepid Phutt moistened his hands and swung his battle-axe.

“If you won’t all join the minority, then you shall all join the majority!” he cried, and with this dreadful threat he shouted to the Spirit of the Thunder to lend him a hand, and boldly attacked the entire clan! His first awful blow laid Brokotoctotick dead at his feet; and the Thunder Spirit, though he did not actually take sides with Phutt and kill anybody, yet rattled and roared a good deal and made it pretty clear that he was in favour of a change.

So the rest of the braves yielded without more unpleasantness, because their wives implored them to do so for the sake of the children, and Phutt promised them all a little present on the occasion of his next birthday. He immediately put on the bear-skin and rabbit-tails and the kingfisher crown, and everybody bowed down and asked what his first order as chief was going to be.

And he said: "Take Brok and build a huge and solemn funeral fire and burn him with all proper respect on the top of it. As for his wife and family, they may choose whether they will be burnt with him or not. I want them to please themselves. For the rest, everything that was Brok's is, of course, mine; and after we have given him a splendid funeral and Fum has sung a funeral song to last over three days, then I shall ascend the granite throne and we will rejoice for a month, and eat and drink day and night until we nearly burst ourselves. And after that we shall want some hard work and exercise, so I shall lead you against the enemy."

The businesslike way in which Phutt made all these arrangements impressed everybody.

He seemed to calm down again after poor Brok was burnt, and he insisted on a magnificent grave being built for the late chief's ashes; but it was put up miles and miles away from Grimspound; because, if there is one thing a New Stoner is horribly frightened of, it is a

ghost; so when anybody had the misfortune to die suddenly—as generally happened—he was taken far away to be buried or burnt, in order that his ghost might get lost in the middle of the Moor and not by any evil chance find the way back to his old home.

So Phutt reigned in place of Brok; and I am not going to tell you any of the things that he did, because they were exceedingly horrid as a rule. He won all his battles and always had his own way, and the people hated the ground he walked on, and did everything he told them instantly, because he never spoke twice. He defeated all the neighbouring tribes, and those he didn't kill he took for slaves. Poor Mrs. Phutt couldn't stand it, so she died. She was a nice sensible woman, though not equal to the glory of being a chief's wife. In fact, the grandeur killed her, and also the sorrow of knowing what people really thought of Phutt behind his enormous back. But he didn't care. He didn't even go into mourning. He married twenty-seven more wives and bullied

them all. Among other things that he did was to destroy all the Bugaboos but one, which he kept on a chain to frighten the children. He also made several new roads, and invented a new chimney that prevented the huts of his town from being full of smoke when the wind was in the west—which it generally was. And he caused his tribe to become the fiercest and most cruel, and most powerful tribe on Dartmoor. And whenever he had a birthday, which was about once a fortnight, he made the people set up a huge stone in his honour. And many of these stones are still standing on Dartmoor, so you will see them when you go there.

Yet, despite the fact that he had made them so strong and terrible; despite the fact that everybody had sheep and cattle and skins and luxuries; despite the fact that he was the first New Stoner who broke soil and planted seed in it; despite the fact that he was the first New Stoner to invent a sling and hurl stones at the enemy; despite the fact that he patented a splendid trap for wolves, and arranged an

Empire Day, and made the little New Stoners all walk two and two singing about the size of the dominions of Phutt and the blessing of living under Phutt, and the importance of binding the outlying districts to the main camp, and such like—despite all these facts, nobody liked him, because he ruled entirely by fear. And to be always frightened is a bad thing and gets on people's nerves after a time. And they never, never really care for the person who treats them so, however great and grand and clever he may be.

Fum had always to be making poetry in his old age, and it bored him a good deal sometimes; but with practice even Empire Day poetry came pretty easy to him; which was lucky, for he had to invent thousands of poems on that subject.

But, despite all his splendour, Phutt was a cloudy and careworn man. He looked back sometimes to the days when he had a soft heart. But I don't honestly think he ever wanted to go back. At any rate, he stuck tight to his ter-

rible charm, and when he began to grow old he decided that no future chief of his clan would ever get on without it. So he made Fum promise to hand the Flint Heart to a certain young warrior—his own grandson, in fact—who was to succeed him.

And Fum promised, but he did not keep his word. He was, of course, frightfully old himself now, and would have been dead and buried ages ago but for the fact of being a mystery man. A mystery man cannot die under two hundred years, and if he is careful and doesn't go out at night and only eats rice-pudding and mutton-chops, he may live to be five hundred. At any rate, Fum told a lie, and I am the last to excuse him for that. Instead of handing the Flint Heart to the new chief when Phutt closed his eyes and passed away, he buried it with Phutt; because you see he knew only too well what it meant, and he felt that the tribe had now reached a point when it could get on without quite such a harsh and stern man as Phutt to lead it.

“‘King hearts are more than coronets,’” said Fum to himself—quoting Tennyson, funnily enough. “Anyway, I’ll take what risk there is and bury the charm with him. And if the Thunder Spirit makes a fuss and burns me up—well, really I don’t much mind. I’ve lived a very interesting life, and I shall escape having to write any more Empire poetry. In fact, nothing is so bad but that it might be worse.”

So after they had burnt Phutt—for he decided before he died that he would be burnt and then buried—Fum dropped the Flint Heart privately into his ashes. And Phutt slept under the heather, and the finest thing in cairns that you can well imagine was erected over him. And everybody hoped with all their might that Phutt’s ghost would keep quiet and not come worrying round Grimspound afterwards on moonshiny nights.

And the Thunder Spirit did nothing, for he was busy somewhere else at the critical mo-

ment; so Fum had to make up more Empire poetry after all. But his *magnum opus*, or masterpiece, which would have been the "Saga of Phutt," in three hundred and seventy verses, he did not live to finish. He had learned and committed to his amazing memory two hundred and fourteen verses when there came a dreadful and fatal incursion of a tribe from Cosdon Beacon, on the north side of Dartmoor. They fell upon Grimspound by night, and because the new chief was an intelligent New Stoner who didn't like bloodshed, and believed that it was better far to rule by love than fear, and was, in fact, several thousand years ahead of his time, therefore he and his folk had to pay the usual penalty of being so much wiser than everybody else. In fact, they all perished and Grimspound ran streams of gore, and the scene was such that I hate even to think of it, and won't write a word more about it. Then the conquering tribe started *their* Empire Day, and made *their* tinkling rhymes; and in their turn,

after many years, gave place to other and stronger people, according to the way of things that changes never.

And now we drop the curtain for a moment, and alter the scenery a little and give the Moor time to rest and get over all those fearful troubles that Grimspound has seen. The first act of the story of the Flint Heart is ended, and, since there is an interval of five thousand years between the first act and the second, there ought to be plenty of time for you to have a sponge-cake and a glass of ginger-beer, if not a whole Christmas dinner, before we go on again.

CHAPTER IV

MERRIPIT FARM

A place like Dartmoor doesn't change in a hurry, but thousands and thousands of years leave a mark even there; and now you will find, after all this time has passed, that it looks rather different. The village of Grimspound is deserted; the beehive roofs are gone and only the stones remain. The men and women and children, the dogs and cattle and fierce beasts, have all vanished. The walls of the city are broken and shattered. The stream that ran through the midst of it has nearly dried up, and heather and brake-fern and whortleberries and rushes and sedges and grass fill the homes of the old New Stoners. Over the mighty cairn where Phutt was buried on Fur Tor grows a great mound of gorse, and, as you would expect, it is the toughest and prickliest gorse on

the whole of Dartmoor; because its roots are down in the dust of that tough and prickly hero.

And now I'll surprise you. Though all these thousands and thousands of years have passed, two of the principal characters in the story are still as lively as ever. One is the Thunder Spirit, who roars and rattles about on Dartmoor just as he used to do in the good old New Stone days; and the other is the Flint Heart. You see the Heart was buried with Phutt, to keep it out of mischief, and it has kept out of mischief ever since; but unluckily it has not turned into dust, as Phutt did. In fact, if you should ask it how it is, it might answer "Doing quite nicely, thank you, and thoroughly rested and perfectly ready to begin business at once!"

And now, if you look round, you will find that a new order of things has begun on Dartmoor. In the low places, or snug spots sheltered under the hills and besides the sparkling rivers, many a house, such as you are accustomed to see, has sprung up. There are

farms and cottages, and even the pigs and cows have much better dwellings than the New Stoners were wont to live in.

One of those houses is called Merripit Farm, and it lies in the great valley under Merripit Hill, a few miles from poor old ruined Grims-pound. There are a good many other farms in this valley; but long before men found the place the pixies discovered it.

Pixies, of course, are the same as fairies, and their first cousins are the brownies and the elves, and the kobolds and the trolls, and the fays and the sylphs, and the sprites and the gnomes; and the second cousins are the bogies and the bogles, the flibbertigibbits and the deeves, the urchins and the dwarfs, and the dwerfers and the pigwidgeons and the Pucks, and the Will-o'-the-wisps and the Jack-o'-lanterns and the Jacky-toads and the imps; and their water-cousins are the Nereids and mer-men and mer-girls and mer-boys, and the naiads and the kelpies and the nixies; and their third cousins—twenty times removed,

I am glad to say—are the spooks and the banshees, and the goblins and the hobgoblins, and the hobble-goblins and the hobblebobble-goblins, and the wraiths and the wishtnesses, and the cacodemons and the furies, and the harpies and the succubus and the succuba, and the fiends of the air and the earth and the water, and the vampires and the ghouls, and the afrits and ogres and ogresses. And if you don't believe in these folk, I can only say that you are making a mistake and you'll live to find it out sooner or later. All the very best people, including Mr. Stead and Sir Oliver Lodge, believe in spooks, if they don't believe in the other things; and it seems to me both unkind and silly to make such a fuss about the spooks and write whole books about them and take no notice of all the others. As for me, I know Dartmoor pretty well, and I believe in everything that happens there. I have seen a Jack-o'-lantern with my own eyes, and I can't say more than that. And not to believe in Devonshire pixies—well, you might just as well

not believe in Devonshire cream or Devonshire mud, or any other of the fine things that belong to Devonshire. And, besides all these arguments to prove that there are such things, this story will be full of pixies in a moment; so that's proof positive and an end of the matter. And the boy or girl who still holds out, and says that he or she does not believe in them, had better be sent to bed at once; and if he doesn't get his nose pinched blue before the morning, or if she doesn't find her hair in a proper tangle when the time comes for combing it to-morrow, I shall be a good deal surprised.

But now we must go to Merripit Farm; and the first thing you'll see there is a rough ridiculous dog without a tail and with his hair all down over his blue eyes. He is an old English sheep-dog, and he looks as much like a monkey as a dog. But he means well, and he has brains in his head and knows a good many things you don't and never will, and can do a good many things you can't and never can. And he believes in the pixies with all his might,

and would no more give up believing in them than he would give up a bone if he had the luck to find one.

Here comes his master—a very big man, you see—with a red neck and pale hair, and a fat, clean-shaved, good-natured face. He is called Billy Jago, and his wife is called Sally Jago, and his children are called John and Mary and Teddy and Frank and Charles and Sarah and Jane and Unity; and his baby is called Dicky, and his dog is called Ship.

John and Mary and Sarah and Jane are very brown, and their eyes are brown, too, like their mother's; and Charles and Teddy and Frank and Unity are fair, with yellow hair and grey eyes, like their father's; and the baby, Dicky, has struck out a new idea of his own, and his eyes are as blue as the sky in August and his hair is as red as the brake-fern when winter comes. You see them all looking rather smart, because it is Sunday, and they have got their best clothes on. John is eighteen and quite grown up, so his clothes are not inter-

esting; but Mary has on a plum-coloured dress with a red bow in her hair and a clean pinafore; and Teddy wears a knickerbocker suit made out of green cloth, with a red tie; and Frank is dressed just the same. Charles has a grey suit with a yellow tie and a Scotch cap, which is his great joy; and Sarah and Jane are clothed alike in dark-blue dresses with light-blue bows and white stockings; and as for Unity, she has Sarah's last year's dress cut down, so she doesn't really count yet. Besides she is only five, and nobody gets very exciting till they grow rather older than that. Of course I don't mean by this that it is not a very right and proper thing to be five. All the most successful and pleasant people in the world have been five once, and even three, and two. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being five; but if that is the case with you, you must choose your friends either among other people of five or among people who are over fifty. And if you feel a doubt about the age you have only

to ask, and if the people you want to know also want to know you, they will instantly declare they are five or fifty, as the case may be.

The Sunday dinner at Merripit Farm was a very good one indeed. It began with a goose, went on to a plum-pudding and mince-pies, and finished up with ten oranges and ten sticks of the best milk chocolate and ten little puppets made to represent Father Christmas. Their heads screwed off quite simply, and they were full of mixed sweets.

You will naturally be rather surprised at such a noble meal. But I must tell you that it was Christmas Day as well as Sunday, and the young Jagos had been expecting this fine feed for twelve months—ever since last Christmas Day, in fact. They all ate too much, I'm sorry to say—all but Charles and Unity and the baby. But there was a difference between them, because Charles and Unity stopped quite of their own accord, and the baby would have been eating still, only his mother took him to bed.

These children were all very interesting and all very different. John was grown up, as I mentioned before, and he was going to be a farmer like his father. Mary was fifteen, and she helped her mother and sang songs rather nicely. Teddy was not particularly gifted, but he could catch trout in the streams better than any of the rest of the family, and that was his strong point. Frank could imitate the noise of ducks and turkeys and fowls—not that that was much use. Charles was the reader, and I believe he had more brains than any of them, though nobody took him very seriously except Unity and the baby. Sarah and Jane were twins, and thought alike, and did the same things, and were naughty together, and good together, and had colds in their noses together, and got mumps together, and were lost together on the Moor once for nearly two days, which was the finest thing they had so far done, and they were rescued together and shared the fame of it. Unity had made no great mark in history so far, but she

was the prettiest of them all, and she always put me in mind of a little white ragged-robin that had just suddenly come out by the river, and was looking round it with much surprise at the extraordinary world into which she had budded and bloomed. Unity, in fact, was always ragged and always surprised. On Sundays she was not ragged, but she made up for that by going to church and being more surprised than ever. And she began every sentence with "I wonder"; and she was quite right and quite wise to be so much astonished at things in general, because everybody ought to be astonished at pretty nearly everything that happens when they are five. The age when nothing astonishes you is eighteen; but after that, as you grow older and older, things gradually begin to astonish you again, until when you get quite old—say from forty to a hundred—much that happens will amaze you, and you'll find the world as puzzling and wonderful at the end as you did at the beginning. But eighteen is the grand age, and remember



Charles was staring at his father

never to be astonished when you reach it. John Jago was eighteen, and he was grown up, and he never was astonished—not even when, in the middle of the Christmas dinner, his father said a very astonishing thing.

What it was and what came of it you shall hear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE FLINT HEART GETS TO WORK AGAIN

"Up along by Fur Tor, when I was riding the pony over and having a look for the foal Nat Slocombe have lost, I falled in with a foreigner," said Mr. Jago.

When he said "foreigner," he didn't mean what you mean. He was not speaking of a Frenchman or a Russian, a negro or an Indian. He merely meant a stranger. The "foreigner" very likely had only come from some town a few miles off. In this case, however, he had come from rather a long way off, for he lived in London and was a very clever man.

"Yes," continued Mr. Jago, "a lean slip of a chap, long in the legs wi' a learned-looking nose, built for poking into things. And he'm terrible interested in they old roundy-poundies up to Grimspound, and the old stones

that the old men heaved up and stuck all over the Moor; and he've offered me ten pound—ten pound!—if I'll do a job for him up 'pon top of Fur Tor."

"Ten pound, father!" cried Mrs. Jago; and all the little Jagos also cried "Ten pound, father!"

All except John, who was grown up; and, of course, he was not astonished at anything, owing to his age.

"Yes," declared Mr. Jago; "but I'm very much afraid he might as easy and safely have offered a hundred, for 'tis doubtful whether I can do it. In a word, he says there ought to be bronze hid in some of the old men's graves about 'pon the Moor. And if so be as I dig up a bit here, there, or anywhere, he'll give me the money."

"'Tis a wild goose chase," said Mrs. Jago, "and well you know it. The last learned fool as comed up here spent six months digging and delving, and what did he find? Some ashes, and a few odd bits of cracked cloam, and

three amber beads, the like of which he might have bought to Plymouth for two pence. You mind your own business, Billy. Us'll hear you be going to dig at a rainbow foot for rainbow gold next. And I lay this here gentleman's gold be rainbow gold and no better."

"What's rainbow gold, mother?" asked Charles. He was the only one of the young Jagos who ever asked questions, but he asked a great many more than his parents could answer.

"It's stuff and nonsense," said Mrs. Jago, "that's what it is."

"The gentleman's name be Nicodemus Nestor Frodsham Perke, F.R.S., British Museum," said Mr. Jago. He read a card that he had drawn out of his pocket.

"Well, let him go and perk somewhere else," said Mrs. Jago. "Us haven't got no use for him."

If she had known what a terrifically great swell Professor Nicodemus Nestor Frodsham Perke was, I don't suppose that Mrs. Jago

would have said this rather rude and silly thing; but few were more learned than he, and he had written a long book about the New Stone Age, where this story began, and the Bronze Age that followed it; and in this remarkable book he had proved that there must be bronze hidden in the old graves on Dartmoor. Which shows you what a jolly clever man he was; because a common man would have waited till somebody found the bronze and then gone on with his book afterwards; but Professor Perke would have thought that stupid. So he discovered the bronze in his book first and then went down to find it on Dartmoor afterwards. He felt sure that his book must be right, and though other professors, with noses even sharper than his, had said unkind things about the book and declared there was no bronze on Dartmoor, yet many people felt that it was perfectly absurd to suppose a book that had taken a wise man five years to write, and had two hundred and twenty pictures and one thousand and six pages, not

to mention the appendix, could possibly be wrong. So sensible people all agreed with the great and learned professor that if there wasn't any bronze hidden on Dartmoor, somebody was very much to blame for it.

"Of course, I ban't a-going to waste my time with the man," explained Mr. Jago; "but as to-morrow's a holiday and there's nought for me to do, I shall just help him a bit. That old grave as he've found under Fur Tor have never been broke open by the look of it, and nobody but him would have found it, for 'tis right in the midst of the prickliest fuzz-bush as ever I comed across. But to-morrow I be going to break it open—just for to see if anything be there. And no harm's done since the day be a holiday."

"More fool you," said Mrs. Jago.

But when the next day came Mr. Billy put on his working clothes and went, and Charles went with him to help carry his furse-hook and pick and spade and basket, and Ship went with them to have a bit of sport, for he was

a hard-working dog and enjoyed a holiday as much as anybody when he got one.

They reached the spot, but the Professor was not there. As a matter of fact he had sat down two miles off to rest, and been so much interested in his great and wonderful thoughts that he had quite forgotten to rise again. He had suddenly struck upon quite a new way of explaining Dartmoor, and why Dartmoor was Dartmoor, and where it had come from, and what it looked like millions of years ago—long, long before even the New Stoners had arrived upon it. Which subject so much interested Professor Perke, that he sat there and filled three notebooks with wonderful ideas; and then suddenly he sneezed forty-two times running, and found that he had got the worst cold he had ever had in his life. So he thrust the notebooks into his pockets, and went to the farm where he was lodging, and put his feet into hot water and mustard, and tallowed his nose, and took a favourite medicine of his, and then retired to bed and stopped there for

three days. All that time he never once thought of Mr. Jago; but it didn't much matter, because Mr. Jago never once thought of him.

What really did happen was this: Charles and his father and Ship arrived at the old cairn, and, little knowing that one of the most famous men who had ever been a great and powerful and terrible chief in the old days was buried beneath it, cut down the furzes, and hacked away the peat and heather, and threw open the tomb as if they were merely digging potatoes. It was the grave of the great Phutt that they opened, and, of course, they found no bronze there, because, as you may remember, Phutt was a New Stone man, and he passed away some years before the arrival of the first pin on Dartmoor. So Billy Jago found no bronze in the grave of Phutt; in fact, I was going to say he found nothing at all, and it is a pity for him that I cannot do so; but something he did find, and he picked it up and put it in his pocket.

"The gentleman might like this here funny old stone," he said.

"'Tis a piece of flint, father," declared Charles.

"Of course 'tis—any fool can see that," answered his father; and he spoke so roughly that Charles felt much astonished, and started away from him. Because Billy Jago, as a rule, was the kindest father that ever loved a parcel of boys and girls; and it amazed his son to hear this sharp word. But if he had known half as much as you know, he would not have been amazed at all.

What had happened was this: Billy Jago was carrying the Flint Heart in his waistcoat pocket, and the charm, after such a long rest, felt bubbling over with wickedness, and was delighted to get to work again without the least delay.

If Charles had chanced to look south-south by west at that moment, he would have seen the Thunder Spirit laughing over the edge of a black cloud; but he was staring at his

father, and so missed the sight. As for Billy, he loaded his pipe, lighted it, and then turned to Charles.

"Pick up the tools and carry 'em home," he ordered.

"All of them, father!" cried Charles.

"Yes, all of 'em. You heard what I said. You ain't deaf, are you?"

His father strode off, and Charles stood almost as still as the granite stones of Phutt's grave. He had never been so much surprised in his life, and presently his astonishment turned into grief. He cried a little, for he was only twelve and he loved his father exceedingly. Then he dried his eyes, got the tools together, and found that he could just carry them. So he whistled to Ship, and together the dog and the boy started for home.

But long before they got there, Charles felt the weight of the tools was more than he could bear, and Ship, who happened to be a very observant dog, noticed his difficulty, so he

caught the pick in his teeth and dragged it along to help Charles.

Progress was slow, and it had grown dark before they got home to Merripit; but it could not be called "Merry" any more, for the Flint Heart had arrived and set to work at once. When Charles came in, he found his mother in a fearful rage, walking up and down the kitchen; and John, who was grown up, sat by the fire nursing a black eye and trying not to look astonished; and Mary was getting the twins into bed; and Teddy was under the table shivering with fear; and Frank was hiding behind the settle; and Unity was merely wondering; and the baby was sound asleep.

His mother turned to Charles at once and began to question him.

"All along of that wretch of a man—no doubt," she said. "I suppose he've made his ten pounds, and now he feels too grand and fine for his own home and his wife and childer."

“Do please give me something to eat,” said Charles. “I’m terrible hungry, and father left me to drag home all the tools, and but for Ship here, who helped, and who’s terrible hungry too, I should never have fetched ’em all back.”

“Who was this here man?” asked his mother, while she got Charles something to eat. “I should think ’twas Old Scrat himself from the way your father’s going on. He’s bewitched and overlooked by the evil eye—so sure as I’m alive.”

“Nobody came near us,” explained Charles with his mouth full. “We dug and dug, and found nought but a bit of flint with a hole in it. And then, so sudden as a flash of lightning, father turned on me and spoke as never he spoke afore, and ordered me to bring home the tools, and went off without me. And, by the looks of you all, he wasn’t no better when he got back.”

Teddy spoke and told Charles what had happened.

"He comed in shouting out for his dinner, and when mother said 'twasn't ready, he said it ought to be, and John stood up for mother, and father knocked him edgewise over the fender, and just look at John's eye! And I hooked it after that, and so did Frank, for we thought 'twould be our turn next. Then he went for mother again, and when we come back they was having a pretty set-to—wasn't you, mother?"

"I doubt he's gone mad—or else the pixies are playing a game with him," said Charles.

Then Teddy went on:

"But as a rule when father and mother have words, mother gets the best of it—don't you, mother? Only this time father got the best of it. And he ate up all the tid-bits of the dinner, and then off he went, because he said he wanted to pluck a crow with Mr. French down in the valley. He said he didn't see why Mr. French should be the leading man in Postbridge, and he wasn't going to stand it. And goodness knows what'll happen next."

At that moment a terrible noise broke out down by the garden gate. Men were shouting and dogs were barking. Then there was a crash, and Ship rushed out to see who the dogs were, and Charles rushed out to see who the men were. But Mrs. Jago stopped where she was, and so did John, who was grown up, and so did Mary and Teddy and Frank and Unity. They had been so much terrified already that they felt it did not much matter what happened.

Mrs. Jago sighed, and John asked for another piece of brown paper for his eye.

Then the master of the house came in, and Charles followed him.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEETING

Mr. Jago was quite pleased, but he did not show pleasure in the old and kindly fashion; he came in very roughly and slapped his leg and explained that he had done a good stroke of business.

“Met old Bassett going down the road, and I offered him a bit more for that field of his than French offered, and now I’ve got thicky meadow that I’ve been wanting this many a day. I’ve just been one too many for French; and when I met him I told him what I’d done, and he got in a proper rage and hit me, and then I gave him one on the head and rolled him over in the hedge!”

After explaining all this, Mr. Jago called for his supper and behaved roughly and unkindly; but he did not strike anybody, and he

did not talk to anybody but John, who was grown up, and also had two black eyes. His father seemed quite to have forgotten that he had just hurt John so cruelly with his fist, and he talked about the future as if he and John were the best of friends.

“We’ll soon wake this place up!” he said. “Everybody’s asleep here. If we get to work and harden our hearts against all their nonsense, we’ll come out at the top of them all by this time next year. I know how to get the best of them, and I’m going to do it, and John’s going to help.”

He explained to John a number of horrid ideas that had occurred to him. They were not exactly the sort of ideas that occurred to Phutt when he owned the Flint Heart, because the world had moved on a good deal since Phutt’s time; and among other things that had come into it were policemen.

Policemen have quite spoiled a good many of the fine and dashing deeds people used to do, because they interfere and march you off

to prison; and there's nothing in the least fine or dashing about being locked up. But Billy Jago knew that there were policemen and prisons, and he had no wish to quarrel with the one or find himself in the other; so he planned his future accordingly. His ideas were quite as hard and cruel as Phutt's ideas, only instead of carrying them out like Phutt, and knocking people's heads off, and burning their houses down, and stealing their cattle, he had to trust to cleverness in business and hardness in all his dealings. There are all sorts of dodges in business, I am sorry to say, and Billy Jago, who was once such an honest and straight and kind-hearted man, seemed now not only to have learned every one of these abominable dodges, but also to have become horribly clever at putting them into practice. The thing that puzzled Mrs. Jago most of all was to know how and where her husband had picked up these wicked tricks. And, of course, he couldn't tell her himself because he didn't know. But you and I know only too well that

it was Flint Heart that taught him. And men who used to laugh at Billy and call him a good-natured fool and everybody's friend, laughed no more. Or if they did, it was on the wrong side of their mouths. And laughing on the wrong side of your mouth is almost as painful as having a tooth out, as you can easily prove if you care to try it. First laugh on the right side of your mouth, which is the side you always laugh upon; then turn your laugh over carefully with your tongue to the wrong side, and you will find it hurt like anything. It sounds quite different, too, when you laugh on that side.

Time passed, and Billy began to be a marked man. He was very nearly marked in a way he didn't much like, for an enemy—he had a lot of enemies now, I regret to say—hid behind the hedge on a dark night, knowing that Billy must pass that way; and when he came along—whistling and very pleased with himself over a good stroke of business—the enemy flung a brickbat at him and nearly hit him

on the head. And Mr. Jago heard where the brickbat had come from, and he jumped into the hedge, and for once in a way behaved exceedingly like Phutt, and thrashed his enemy until the man wriggled about, like a worm on a hook, and yowled for mercy.

But in his home, I'm thankful to tell you, Billy gradually grew a little calmer. Even the charm couldn't keep up the pressure above a certain number of pounds to the square inch of his heart; and sometimes Billy relaxed and laughed among his children, and was quite the nice old amiable father he had been. But these good moments only happened very occasionally when the Flint Heart was tired, and, between them he behaved in a fierce and harsh and savage manner.

At last the children and Ship held a meeting about it in the wood-house, and Charles took the chair, because John was grown up, as I think I told you, and it looked as though John was going to imitate his father.

Charles said: "Brothers and sisters and

Ship, we have assembled here to find out some way to make father nice again as he used to be."

And all the children answered, "Hear, hear!"

Then Ted addressed the meeting, and he said: "Father's a regular right-down beast."

And Charles said: "Order! Order! The question before the meeting is how to make him nicer. Besides, you'll hurt Ship's feelings if you say that."

Then Frank sat down, and Teddy got up and spoke, and he said: "Let's give him a present."

And all the children said: "Hear, hear!"

So it was decided to give him a present.

Then Mary got up and asked: "Where are we going to get it from?"

And all the children said: "Hear, hear!"

The twins never had spoken in public, and they wouldn't break their rule.

Charles called upon them, but they refused; he urged them, but they were firm and shook their heads. Then, in order of seniority, it was Ship's turn, and he barked very loudly and

wagged his tail, with such unusually far-reaching wags, that he almost knocked Charles out of the chair.

And all the children said: "Hear, hear!"

And now, if you're really as clever as I take you to be, you will bowl me over and convict me of telling a dreadful story. Not this dreadful story of the Flint Heart, but another dreadful story of the dog called Ship. Because, when he first appeared, I mentioned quite distinctly that he was an old English sheep-dog without any tail; and now I have gone and given him a splendid tail, and, worse, I have made him wag it, and nearly knock Charles out of the chair at the meeting with it.

How am I going to get out of that fix?

I will tell you the truth, and the truth has got quite as many people out of a fix in its time as it has got other people into a fix. The truth, then, is that Ship had no tail of his own, but, for an important thing like this meeting, he borrowed a tail from a collie dog who also lived at Merripit. He hired the tail for one after-

noon—just as people sometimes hire a suit of black velvet and a sword when they are going to attend a King's levée; and he paid two bones and a bit of rabbit's skin for it.

And now we must really get back to the meeting.

Ship merely lent the meeting his moral support: he was not much use, because nobody knew what his barks meant; but Charles hoped better things from Unity. She had to speak last, and she was a practised speaker, and knew exactly what she wanted to say before she began.

She said: "I wonder if big brother Charles had not better go to the Pixies for father's present."

And all the children said: "Hear, hear! Hear, hear!"

And Ship barked "Hear, hear!"

And Charles bowed and was bound to admit that Unity had made the cleverest and most practical speech at the meeting.

"I will do my best," he told them. "We've

none of us ever seen a Pixie; but we all know very well there are such people, and to-morrow evening I'll go alone to the Pixies' Holt, and I hope I may have the luck to see one and speak to him. And if he'll only be so good as to listen, something may come of it."

After that the meeting broke up, but not before Mary had proposed a vote of thanks to Charles for taking the chair and for what he promised to do.

CHAPTER VII

DE QUINCEY

Of course, you always skip scenery in books, and so do many other people older than you are, who ought to know better. And many people skip scenery in life also, and never want to look at it, and would rather be shopping or walking down a street than watching the most beautiful sunset or beholding mountains or rivers or the wonder of the sea.

But you'll have to read these few words about the Pixies' Holt, and if you miss one of them the pixies will be much annoyed with you, because they think very highly of the entrance to their domain, and have spent much time and trouble in making it what it is.

Their haunt lies hidden among great trees, where stands a cluster of rocks, all covered with moss and lichens and tufts of grass.

The grasses come and go according to the seasons, so that in Summer the great rocks have green hair, and in Autumn their hair turns yellow, and in Winter it fades and disappears under the razor of the east wind, so that the rocks are bald until the grasses sprout in Spring.

It was Spring when Charles went to the Holt hoping to see a pixie, and he found a little dingle of the woods knee-deep in bluebells, with the great green-haired rocks towering up above them. The bluebells nodded and swayed, and scented the air to the very entrance of the cave among the boulders where fairies were believed to dwell. You went in between two great masses of stone, richly decorated with dark moss; and first you came to a front hall, so big that a couple of foxes could easily dance upright there; and then you came to an inner chamber, only large enough to hold one little child; and then you came to a huge, mysterious, pitch-black hole; and what was beyond that none knew exactly. But that it was

the high road into an important pixy city few sensible people pretended to doubt.

Charles sat down among the bluebells, and waited very patiently indeed. And his patience was rewarded, for he saw some exceedingly curious things that are only seen by patient people sitting quite still in woods. I cannot, however, stop to talk about the squirrels and humble-bees and birds and other busy folk, because many people, far cleverer and patienter than I am, have written whole fat books about them. All I must do is to tell how Charles saw a pixy, and who it was, and what he talked about.

A brown thing emerged from the main entrance of the rocks, and first Charles thought it was a weasel, and then he thought it was a stoat; but it happened to be neither of these beasts, as Charles soon saw, for it stood on its hind-legs and stretched its little arms, and then walked forward six paces and then stood still again. Its countenance was old, its cheeks were thin, and its forehead was larger than

the whole of the rest of its face. It had grey whiskers and a sharp nose, and a sort of hood of dead fern-colour ending in a point, which hung down over one ear. It wore a long cloak, which nearly reached the ground, but was belted at the waist. Under its arm was a little book—far, far smaller than the tiniest “tiny” book that was ever offered for sale in one of those splendid book catalogues that kind booksellers often send to me.

The pixy stood on tiptoe and smelt a bluebell; then he sniffed the air, like a little mouse that has just come out of its hole to seek for adventures; and then he sat down on the blade of a wood-rush, sighed, put on a tiny pair of double-glasses, and opened his tiny book.

Charles thought that he had better speak before the pixy began to read and got interested, because he loved books himself and knew how hard it is to leave them when you have once started. So he said, “If you please, sir, may I talk to you?”

The pixy looked up, as we look up into the

sky when it thunders. He did not answer immediately, but took a wee telescope out of his cloak and attentively examined Charles, who towered above him.

"You are a human boy, I see," he said at last. His voice was thin and sharp, like the sound made by the wings of some flies when they hang in the air; but he spoke quite distinctly, and Charles heard him very well.

"Yes," he answered, "I'm twelve, and I have a good many brothers and sisters, and my name is Charles."

"Any relation of the *great* Charles?" inquired the fairy.

"D'you mean King Charles?"

"No," answered the pixy, "I do not. I mean Charles Dickens. For practical purposes, in the history of this country there is only one Charles."

"I'm afraid I'm not," said the visitor. "I never heard of him."

"So much the worse for you," answered the pixy. Then he began to read his book again.



Charles found himself on equal terms with the little fairy man

"The question is if I may have a few words on a sad subject," said Charles.

The pixy shut his book.

"There is only one sad subject," he said. "And I am always quite ready to discuss it. But let me first reduce you to a more convenient size. Have no fear: when our talk is at an end I will restore you to your present absurd dimensions."

Charles was a good deal puzzled at this speech, but he felt no fear. The pixy took a pencil from his pocket and made a little diagram on Charles's boot. Then he spoke a magic word, and in an instant Charles found himself on equal terms with the little fairy man. Another strange thing also happened, for he now saw that the wild wood and the bluebells and the great masses of rock were in reality not wild at all. From his present height of three inches and a-quarter he perceived that the bluebells were growing in stately and regular avenues, with walks and sidewalks between them; that the entrance to the cave

was no rough hole between two lumps of rocks, but a magnificent and beautiful gateway of glittering granite covered with wonderful decorations in grey and black. All was thought out and carefully planned, even to the spider's web that held a dead leaf above the entrance, as though it had been a flag at the gate of a city.

"Recline here," said the pixy, "and we will discuss the saddest subject in the world. I may tell you that my name is De Quincey."

"Indeed," said Charles.

"Yes," answered the fairy. "The original great De Quincey, as you may or may not know, was a learned Theban who wrote books—the most wonderful books, in my opinion. So, when the time came for me to choose a name, I called myself De Quincey."

"Do fairies choose their *own* names?" asked Charles.

"Certainly. Why not? At twenty-one years of age we are called upon to give ourselves a name. The great name of 'De Quincey' was not appropriated in Fairyland,

so I took it. And this brings me naturally to the saddest subject in the world. I refer to the music of English prose. It has gone. We have lost it. The music of prose is a thing of the past!"

He took out his handkerchief, and was evidently going to cry.

"Don't cry—explain," said Charles. "I don't know what you mean by the music of prose."

"Then read Sir Thomas Browne and Milton and De Quincey and Landor and Ruskin," said the fairy. "Walter Landor, let me tell you, is an immortal banner on the topmost turret and battlement of our glorious mother-tongue!"

"Dear me!" said Charles, "how beautifully you talk. I do wish I understood these things."

"I always talk like that when I get excited," answered De Quincey. "Nobody can ever say that I do not sustain the charms and cadences of the language. If I ask for another cup of tea at breakfast, it is done like an artist; but I am not appreciated. Who cares for the music

of English prose nowadays? Nobody—nobody. And that is the saddest thing—in fact, the only really sad thing in the world.”

“Was Shakespeare anybody much?” asked Charles. He had not read many books, but once on a time some people lodged at Merripit in the Summer—a reading party of young men from Oxford—and one of them had left behind a copy of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

“Take off your hat when you mention that name!” ordered the fairy; and Charles did so.

“Remember that when anybody speaks of Shakespeare you uncover your head,” repeated De Quincey; and Charles saw that he had taken off his brown cowl, and was quite bald under it.

“The same remark applies to Milton,” he added. “And as to Shakespeare being any good, he is not merely some good, but all good—the most superlative, supreme transcendent, and paramount artist this world has known. I speak as a poet myself.

"Have you read his funny book about the pixies?" asked Charles.

"Before you were born or thought of," answered De Quincey. "He paid Fairyland a visit in order to write it. That was before my time, I grieve to say, but vivid traditions exist amongst us. Shakespeare has been in Fairyland more than once. But we are forgetting the music of English prose. The loss—the heart-breaking loss!"

His lip went down and he drew out his pocket-handkerchief once more.

"Don't interrupt me again," he said to Charles, "because I *will* cry. It is a case for many and bitter tears."

He wept, and Charles noticed that each drop was like a little seed-pearl. They rolled down on either side of the fairy's nose and pattered and hopped on the ground as though they had been hail; but, unlike hail, they did not melt.

Charles was much interested.

"Excuse me," he said, "but might I have some of those?"

"Some of what?" asked the fairy. The worst part of his weeping was over and he began to give long gasps and dry his eyes.

"Some of those beautiful tears," said Charles.

" 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what ye mean,' " quoted De Quincey. "All the same," he added, "I know what ye mean. Yes, you can have them; but they will be of little use to you. The tears of fairies are the seed of the flower euphrasy—known to you as 'eye-bright.' "

"Of course," said Charles. "It grows all over the Moor."

"Sow these fond drops," said the fairy, "and euphrasy will spring up. Sometimes it is white and sometimes it is purple. Experiment has proved that my tears always come up purple. I may mention that Milton refers to the herb in 'Paradise Lost.' "

Neither spoke for a long time after that; then Charles, who had a kind heart and liked to talk of things that he knew interested peo-

ple, asked the pixy what his book was, because he thought it would please De Quincey to talk about it.

"The work I am perusing happens to be a dictionary," answered the fairy. "There is much pleasure and profit to be won from the pages of a dictionary. I have read every letter of the alphabet, and made a study of each—all but 'z.' You may have observed that I never use any word beginning with that letter. The reason is that I have not yet studied it."

"I know two words beginning with 'z,' " declared Charles.

"You surprise me," answered the fairy. "I should not have expected that. What are they?"

"Zebra and Zany," answered Charles.

"Thank you; the zebra I have met with in works on natural history," replied De Quincey; "but I cannot say that the word 'zany' is familiar to me. What do you mean by it?"

"A chap who is a bit soft in his wits—who has got a bee in his bonnet."

"Capital!" said the other. "I'm tired of calling the fairies fools; now I can call them 'zanies' instead. It will make a change."

"Surely no fairies are fools?" asked Charles with great surprise. "I thought they were all as sharp as needles."

"Far from it. In fact, no more sharp as a rule than anybody else. We have just as many fools among us as you have, or the birds have, or the beasts have. Society of all ranks consists mostly of fools. We people with brains—I include you, because you know two words beginning with 'z'—we clever people, I say, have to think for the poor stupids who can't think for themselves."

"And now," said Charles, "I'll tell you what I have come about. It was very lucky that I met such a wonderful and clever pixy, for if most of them are thick-headed, of course they couldn't have helped me."

He then told De Quincey about his father

and how he had changed. He also mentioned the Meeting, and the resolve that everybody had come to at it.

“And then, after we’d decided upon a beautiful present for my father, to get him back into a good temper,” explained Charles, “the question was, What should it be? And my sister Unity thought that I should come and ask the pixies. And here I am.”

De Quincey thought for a few moments. He had not the slightest idea what sort of present the children should get for Billy Jago; but he pretended he knew all about it.

“The problem is not difficult of solution,” he said; “indeed, I could have given you the answer in an instant. Many far more profound cases than this have come under my notice, and I have never had anybody find fault with my decisions. But it happens that on the night of Tuesday next the Zagabog—a ‘z,’ by the way—visits us. The Court is entertaining him at a banquet, and we shall have a very brilliant evening, with plenty of

good music and some recitations and dancing, and a dinner of thirty-eight courses, embracing ices and the best of wines."

"Very interesting indeed," said Charles; "but I'm afraid it won't help me."

"It may or it may not," answered De Quincey; "that rests with you. The Zagabog, of course, knows everything. I suppose you were aware of that?"

"I never heard of him," confessed Charles.

"And never heard of his Agent in Advance, the Snick?"

"Never," said Charles.

"Then I withdraw what I said about you being a clever person," declared the fairy.

"I'm very sorry," answered Charles humbly; "but it was no good pretending I did if I didn't."

"Not a bit," admitted the other. "The Zagabog is easily the best, most brilliant, and wisest creature in the universe. What he doesn't know doesn't matter. Now I will tell you what I can do. Our leading statesmen,

philosophers, and men of letters have each received permission to bring one guest to the banquet. You may come as my guest, and I have little or no doubt that the Zagabog, if I make a favour of it with the Snick, will answer your question."

"This is very kind, I'm sure, and I don't know how to thank you, dear Mr. De Quincey," said Charles.

"You may have it in your power to do me a service on some future occasion," said the fairy. "It is not probable, because we move in very different walks of life; but the world is full of possibilities, as you will find when you grow older and more intelligent. We shall expect you, then, at eight-fifteen for eight-thirty. Be punctual, for the King is the soul of punctuality. It is his only strong point, between ourselves."

"I will be there; but it seems almost too much to have dinner with the King and the Zagabog and the Snick—and you," said Charles.

"It is dazzling, no doubt, and a great experience for a human boy," admitted De Quincey. "You must not, of course, expect to be the Guest of the Evening," he added. "The Zagabog is the Lion of the occasion. He has not visited us since 1704, the year of the Battle of Blenheim in the reign of Queen Anne. You will come merely as my friend. But I may tell you that any friend of mine will have a certain amount of attention paid him."

"I hope not," said Charles. "I only want just to sit in a corner and see it all. Or I might help with the dishes."

De Quincey was much annoyed at this.

"You must come in the spirit of a guest, not in the spirit of a footman," he said. "You must be as grand and haughty as you know how—out of compliment to me. I need hardly say that we dress for dinner."

"Of course," said Charles; "so do I."

"Indeed!" exclaimed De Quincey. "Forgive me for the remark; but I should hardly have expected that you did."

"Always," said Charles; "and also for breakfast and supper."

"I must make a note of that," declared De Quincey, "because it is strong support of one of my most cherished theories. I have always held that to dress for dinner is a pure convention. Why dress for dinner if you don't dress for breakfast?"

"Why, indeed?" said Charles.

"There is no explanation," answered De Quincey. "And I hope, during the course of the banquet, that you will take occasion to mention pretty loudly how you always dress for breakfast."

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Charles. "I wonder you don't."

"I thank you," answered De Quincey. "It will show that you possess the priceless gift of originality, and may add to your importance. Remember that when you arrive here you wait until my Secretary appears. I shall be too busy to come myself, for I shall be putting the finishing touches to the Ode. But my Secre-

tary will be ready to reduce you to a reasonable size; and after that he will conduct you into the entrance hall."

Charles collected De Quincey's tears in a bluebell; then the fairy bowed and wished him "good-day."

"And good-afternoon to you, sir, and thank you very much indeed for all your kindness," said Charles.

The next moment De Quincey had touched his boot and said a magic word; whereupon Charles shot up to his full height of five feet one inch. It felt quite dangerous to be so terrifically large again, and he found that to his human eyes the fairy's tears looked like finest dust. So when he got home he sowed them in the garden and stuck a label over them and wrote on it. "Mr. De Quincey's tears—to turn into 'eyebright.' "

Then he called another Meeting and told everybody all about the things that he had seen and heard.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ZAGABOG

After Charles had told the Meeting all about what had happened, Unity spoke to him privately.

"I wonder," she asked, "if I might come to the fairies' party?"

Charles explained that she had not been invited; but Unity seemed to think that didn't much matter, and, as Charles loved Unity better than anything in the world, he consented to take her.

"I wonder," said Unity, "if Ship might come to the party?"

"He might come to see us safe home afterwards," answered Charles. "But of course he couldn't actually come to the party."

So it was left like that, and when the night arrived, Unity and Charles and Ship went off

quietly without telling anybody about it but the members of the Meeting. Of course, if John had found out he would have stopped them, because John was grown up; so they didn't mention it to him; and they didn't mention it to their mother, and of course they didn't mention it to their father, as they were going entirely on his account to hear the wise Zagabog tell them concerning the gift that was to make Mr. Billy Jago nice and kind again.

Ship went too, and, in the dimpsy light of a June evening, they arrived at the Pixies' Holt at eight-fifteen for eight-thirty, as the fairy had directed.

De Quincey's Secretary, who waited for them, was a small middle-aged fairy with rather a sad face. He had long been accustomed to do exactly what he was told, and he never argued about anything, and you never knew what was really his own opinion of anybody. This concealment was bad for him and made him look sick. He worked the charm, first on Charles, who found himself three

inches and a-half high; and then on Unity, who found herself two inches and a-half high; and then on Ship, who found himself one inch and a-half high, and was very much surprised at the change.

And Unity said, "I wonder if Ship might come to the party now?"

And Ship didn't wonder at all, but declared that he was coming.

Of course they quite understood what he said, because if you are once reduced to fairy size you become able to understand all languages, as all real fairies do.

So Charles asked the Secretary, and he replied that it was not his business, and he would not say whether Ship might go to the party. But he explained that a good many important squirrels and several water-voles and a hedgehog and certain nice birds were coming to the party, so he didn't suppose that one more creature would matter.

Then he led the way, and Charles and Unity and Ship followed him.

The bluebells at the entrance of the Pixies' Holt each had a glow-worm sitting on the top of it, so the visitors entered through a glimmering little avenue of lights; and inside they found a great crowd of fairies and other things all chatting and waiting for dinner to be announced. The men fairies were in evening dress, which consisted of black and white bean-flowers, and the ladies were brilliant in every colour of a rainbow or a beautiful summer garden. Their gowns were made entirely of flower-petals, such as the blossoms of wild geraniums, buttercups, columbines, violets, eglantines, honeysuckles, and other lovely things.

De Quincey was running about in a very excited manner, and when he saw Charles, Unity, and Ship he came forward.

Charles explained why he had brought the others, and De Quincey did not conceal his astonishment; but it was clear that Unity made a great impression on him from the first, and,



The ladies were brilliant in every colour of a rainbow

indeed, a little crowd collected round her the moment that she arrived.

She looked very lovely and less ragged than usual, because she and Charles had both managed to put on their Sunday best before they started; but it was clear that even their best clothes did not much please De Quincey.

"This will never do," he said, quoting the words of one of the most mistaken men who ever lived. "You shall come with me, Charles. Convention demands a beanflower costume on the present occasion; and as for your sister, the ladies will see to her. Be quick: there is just time before the banquet is served."

Some girl fairies took Unity and soon dressed her in blue speedwells, which made her look quite delicious; while Charles was hurried off to De Quincey's private house in the High Street of Fairyland, and the Secretary found an old bean-flower suit that fitted him fairly well, though far too tight at the shoulders. As for Ship, he was not expected to

dress, and the red ribbon round his neck made him far more dressy than any of the other beasts, who had merely combed their fur or feathers and washed their paws or claws, as the case might be, and come as they were.

Presently a gong sounded and the guests streamed into the banqueting-hall. It was lighted from the roof by something that looked like a baby sun; but the colour was that peculiarly radiant shade you may have seen sometimes at breakfast when there has been a pot of salmon and shrimp-paste to eat with your bread-and-butter. A delicate and very beautiful beam of salmon-and-shrimp light spread through the apartment, and everybody's face shone with a pink glow that added much to the natural beauty of the fairies, and made the old ones look merely middle-aged and the middle-aged appear quite young again.

Covers were laid for three hundred and thirty-five persons; but the beasts sat at a table apart, though near enough to hear the songs and speeches. Their dishes were slightly dif-

ferent from those brought to the other diners. Ship sat between a lady stoat and a lady pheasant. They tried to look at life with each other's eyes, and taught each other many things worth knowing.

Unity would sit beside Charles, and De Quincey sat on her right, and on Charles's left sat a very beautiful fairy called Lady Godiva, after the sweet heroine of that name.

At the top of the table were the King and the Queen, with the Guest of the Evening, the Zagabog, between them. The King and the Queen were elderly, but still handsome; the Zagabog was not merely elderly, but very nearly as ancient as the earth itself. He belonged to the grand old order of creatures that began soon after the Earth flew off from the Sun and set up being a planet on her own account. His friends were the Thunder Spirit, the Spirit of the Rain, the Spirit of Burning Mountains, and others equally important and powerful. But he was older than all the rest, and also more wonderful and more wise.

He wore nothing but gold, and behaved in the kindest manner to great and small. His table manners were homely, and he knew everything.

Strictly speaking, he was not beautiful, except his pale-green eyes. His back was round, his nose was large and long, his hands were really more like paws than hands, and his tail was ratty, but very neat and always well cared for.

The Snick really *looked* more remarkable than the Zagabog, though he was only an Agent in Advance. He wore black, with an old-fashioned stock and a bunch of seals and the hood of a Cambridge Master of Arts. He put on a great deal of "side," and made a great deal of unnecessary difficulty always about the Zagabog, and pretended that he was booked up for years and years in advance, and altogether behaved in such a way that you might have thought *he* was the great man and the humble Zagabog a mere nobody.

Music played during the banquet, and there

was much conversation. Everybody thought the Zagabog appeared in very good form; and this was true, because he always enjoyed his visits to the fairies, and was especially fond of their present King and Queen.

The Zagabog went round the world paying visits of this kind, and seeing where he could be useful and make people happier and wiser. His life was a ceaseless round of visits. He lived in a golden island behind the sunset, but was seldom there for more than a few weeks in the winter, and then only that he might take a rest-cure; and his busy life was spent among birds and beasts and the things under the sea. He regarded a visit to the fairies as more of a holiday than serious work, for they always did everything they could to give him a pleasant time. Of course he had to be made small when he came to see them, but his real size was huge—in fact, as big as the Thunder Spirit and the rest of those mighty people.

The banquet consisted of the best fairy food, and I shall not tell you about it, because you

will only grow discontented with what you have at home and want to taste the magical dishes and drink the magical wine, which never gets into your head, but only into your heart. So we will go on to the time when nearly everybody had had enough, except a few of the beasts, who had had too much. Then the Snick, who was Master of the Ceremonies, stood up in his place at the bottom of one of the tables, wiped his mouth in a rose-leaf napkin, and rapped loudly with the drumstick of a roasted grasshopper.

Everybody cheered him, and the Snick, who liked fame—even the fame that belongs to an Agent in Advance—bowed to the right and bowed to the left and bowed to the high table where royalty sat.

Then he said: “Your Majesties, Mr. Zaga-bog, ladies and gentlemen and beasts, our entertainment this evening is various and picturesque, gorgeous and refined, harmonious and artistic. The first item will be an Ode composed and written by the fairy poet, De

Quincey. It is entitled 'Mr. Zagabog,' and it will give you a brief sketch of the life-history, achievements, and precious peculiarities of your honored guest."

There was a great stir. The Zagabog smiled out of his gentle green eyes and took wine with De Quincey. Then the soloist stood up, and the chorus stood up, and the band tuned up; because De Quincey was not only a poet, but a musician, and he had written the music of the Ode and arranged all the parts and everything. It was, in fact, a cantata—so he said. In order to conduct, he got on to the table. His *bâton* was a furze-needle and he tapped one of the wine-goblets—the seed-case of a campion—that he might command attention and silence the conversation.

Then the opening bars of the Ode were given. It began rather solemnly, but worked up into a spirited air before the solo. The first soloist was one of the greatest singers that Fairyland has ever known. She called herself Madame Melba, and her voice was like the

little twitter of the swallows when they are catching flies for their young ones. The gentleman soloist was known as Sir Charles Santley, and his high notes sounded like a bee in a cowslip, only with more feeling. They sang alternate verses, while the chorus struck in at the end of each verse.

I cannot give you the music of this great performance, because it is copyrighted; but the words I have in my possession. They are, however, far too important words for the end of a chapter, and I shall begin the next one with them.

CHAPTER IX

THE ENTERTAINMENT

The first item was the great "Song of Mr. Zagabog"; and it went like this:

I.

We shall sing the magic Story of an Isle beyond
the Sun,

Of a precious golden island never seen by anyone;
So listen, listen, listen to our soft and limpid lays
Of the Island and the Zagabog from old pre-
Cambrian days.

Chorus.

The mild and humble Zagabog,
The tender-hearted Zagabog
With prehistoric ways.

II.

Upon his wondrous head he wore a gold and ruby
crown,

His eyes were green and rather sad, his tail hung
meekly down;

But on a throne of early mud he comfortably sat

And ruled his Golden Island in a way we marvel
at.

He was a peaceful Zagabog,
A practical old Zagabog,
And quite unique at that.

III.

For Nature only made but one, though we shall
never know

Why just a single Zagabog exhausted Nature so.
His subjects first were trilobites, the newest of
the new,

And then came other bygone beasts that leapt and
swam and flew.

But all obeyed the Zagabog,
The good primeval Zagabog:
Which they were right to do.

IV.

From periods ante-Primary he dated, as we know,
And with the keenest interest observed that won-
drous show

Of shells and fish and monstrous efts and dragons
on the wing;

Then noted down the changes that the rolling
ages bring.

That scientific Zagabog,
That most observant Zagabog:
And he loved everything.

v.

Some twenty million years rolled by, and all the
Isle went well;
Great palms grew on the mountain-tops, huge
ferns adorned the dell;
And everywhere huge reptiles took their Mesozoic
ease,
And ate each other frequently, with snap and
sneeze.

But their beloved Zagabog,
Their wise and wakeful Zagabog,
They always tried to please.

vi.

For in those Secondary times, when monsters had
their day,
Triassic and Jurassic giants about his feet would
play;
And through the air there sometimes came the
Archæopteryx—
A funny sort of feathered thing where bird and
dragon mix.

“Your fossil,” said the Zagabog,
The humour-loving Zagabog,
“Will put them in a fix!”

vii.

He made no laws, he made no fuss; he just sat on
his throne

With a genial simplicity peculiarly his own.
The Plesiosaur, the Teleosaur, the Early Crocodile,
The weird Cretaceous ocean-folk, who never,
never smile—
All worshipped their old Zagabog,
Their quaint benignant Zagabog,
In his enchanted Isle.

VIII.

More ages passed, more monsters passed, and others took their place;
The Zagabog he still went on from endless race to race,
Till Toxodons and Mammoths came, with Sloths of stature grand,
Whose small relations still hang on in many a sunny land.
And though an old-time Zagabog,
A right-down Early Zagabog,
He gave them all his hand.

IX.

For, rich with the wide wisdom of a million million years,
He always an optimist and felt no growing fears,
Till Palæolithic ages brought Dame Nature's latest joys,
And all his Golden Island rang and rippled with the noise.

“Good gracious!” said the Zagabog;
“God bless us!” cried the Zagabog;
“They’re fairy girls and boys!”

X.

All together:

About his throne with laughter shrill the tiny
people came
And climbed upon his aged knees and bade him
make a game.
And still he rules and still he helps the fairies
with their fun.
Of course, he’ll never die himself, there being
only one—
One calm persistent Zagabog,
One dear pre-Cambrian Zagabog,
Beyond the setting sun.

This very fine song of the history of the Zagabog was much admired, and the Zagabog himself liked it as well as anybody. First he called up De Quincey and patted him on the back and shook hands with him; and then the solo singers, and the chorus, and the orchestra were all brought up to be complimented. And everybody agreed that it was quite the best song that De Quincey had made. He got so

excited that Charles was afraid he would break down and cry again; but he recovered presently and bowed to everybody, and then returned to his seat and dashed off a filbert-shell of dry old wortleberry wine (vintage 1862). He was then quite himself once more and ready to criticise the next item on the programme.

But there followed a brief delay. The Zagabog signalled to the Snick, and the Snick hastened to his side, and the Zagabog whispered to him. Then the Snick announced, in his most important tone of voice that, with the permission of his Majesty, the Zagabog would like to say four words.

Everybody cheered and the King answered: "Certainly—as many words as you please, Mr. Zagabog."

But the Zagabog only used the four that he wanted to, and they were very simple.

He said: "Please may I smoke?"

And when the King had given permission he brought out his cigar-case and selected a cigar and bit the top off. Then the Snick struck a



The Snick announced the Zagabog would like to say four words



match and held it to the cigar, and the Zagabog, now perfectly happy, blew a column of smoke into the air and settled down to enjoy the next item on the programme. I cannot tell you what sort of cigars he smoked, because, if it was known, nobody would ever smoke any other sort; but I may mention this: it was a cheap cigar, and in the advertisements we are always told that it possesses the delicious flavour and aroma of the old Havana of a hundred years ago; and yet the price brings it within the reach of the most modest purse. So, when you see *that* advertisement, you will know the sort of cigar the Zagabog liked and still likes.

Pixies never smoke. Tobacco does not agree with them; besides, many fairies, such as the trolls and dwergers and kobolds and other underground people who work in the mines, dare not do so, because of the danger of explosions.

The Snick put on his glasses and read out the second item in the programme:

"A fairy story will now be told by Hans Christian Andersen!"

This announcement was well received, and the aged sprite who went by that most famous of all names in all the Realms of Fairie got up and waited quietly for the applause to cease. He was very, very old, and his face was like a wrinkled walnut-shell, and his eyes were black, and his hair and beard were white as a tuft of the cotton-grass that dances over a Dartmoor bog and tells you to look out where you are going. This ancient person had always been a great teller of stories, and some he invented; but the best that he told were about things that had really happened to fairies in the past; and the ones they liked most of all were about their adventures with human beings.

Now Hans Christian Andersen cleared his throat, sucked a honeydew lozenge to steady his vocal cords, and began with all the ease and finish of a skilled story-teller the tale of

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE TULIPS.

“In the days of Your Majesty’s great-grandfather we pixies had rather more to do with human beings than is at present the case. The deterioration of mortals set in about a hundred years ago, and it has steadily increased, with the result we have had less and less to do with them; and I fear that before long our relations with the human kind will cease altogether. The fault, I need hardly say in this company, is their own, and nobody is likely to contradict me when I add that the loss will also be theirs.”

At this point in the story Charles was horrified to hear Unity interrupt the speaker.

In her tiny but shrill voice she piped out these words:

“I wonder if you would make it easier, please. I don’t know what you are talking about!”

Some fairies cried "Hush! hush!" and the Snick said "Order!" and De Quincey was furious that any guest of his should do such a rude thing, and Charles was just going to apologise humbly for his sister on account of her age when the old fairy spoke.

"You are perfectly right," he said. "I stand corrected. When anybody uses a word of more than three syllables in a fairy story he doesn't know his business. It sha'n't occur again."

"At the same time," declared the King, "I insist on knowing who interrupted."

De Quincey got up.

"A human girl, your Royal Highness," he explained. "Her brother, who is a human boy, is here as my guest, and I understand from him that she *would* come. I owe it to myself, however, to declare that she was not invited."

"We will look into the matter after the entertainment," said the King. Then he turned

to Hans Christian Andersen and bade him proceed.

“In the time of Your Majesty’s great-grandfather,” resumed the story-teller, “there was an old woman who lived by the river Dart, and she grew very lovely tulips in her garden. They were white and scarlet and yellow and purple; and some were streaked and some were blotched, and some were splashed with a lovely mixture of dawn and sunset colours. She was a good old woman, and the fairies liked her so well that they used to churn her butter for her, and clean her cottage, and look after her bees, and do all the thousand other things that fairies can do for mortals, if mortals will only permit them. In exchange for these kind acts the old woman let us have the free use of her tulip-bed, and in the Spring all the fairy mothers used to take their babies to the tulips, because there is no better and pleasanter cradle for a baby than a tulip in full bloom. When the sun is out the tulip

opens wide, but when the sun sets the tulip shuts up again; and so, you see, as a cradle it is a perfect flower, and I have known as many as a hundred fairy babies lying in the tulips at one time while their mothers rocked the stems. Then, at evening, the tulips and the babies would all go to sleep together, and the petals of the flowers would close tight, so that no wandering rascal of a spider or beetle could blunder in upon the babies and frighten them, or rain fall upon them if there chanced to be a shower.

“It was one of the great events of the fairy year when the tulips came out; and after that pleasant old woman died, as even the best of mortals and fairies have to do, we all hoped that some equally nice old woman would come to the cottage and take care of the tulips. But, alas! instead of another nice old woman, there came a very horrid young man, and he dug up the tulips, flung them into the river, and planted rows of turnips there instead. Your Majesty’s great-grandfather was furi-

ous, and so was everybody else; but that did not make any difference. I need hardly tell you that we took very good care the horrid young man's horrid young turnips were a great failure; and, indeed, we allowed nothing to grow on that piece of land again. He tried all sorts of things, but he never tried tulips, which were the only plants that we should have permitted to prosper. And the end of the story is that we always looked after that good old woman's grave in the churchyard at Widecombe. There was nobody else belonging to her who cared to do so; but we did, out of gratitude to her memory; and never a weed grew there, and never a mole burrowed there; but the grass was always trim and neat, and a white violet was the sole flower that we allowed to grow upon it. And that is the end of my simple tale."

Then the old fairy bowed and sat down.

"A good enough story, but rather too sad for the occasion," said the King.

The Zagabog, however, thought very highly

of it, and complimented Hans Christian Andersen on his language, and took wine with him, and hoped that the telling the story had not made him tired.

The Snick then made an announcement.

“The first half of our entertainment is now concluded,” he said, “and before we proceed to the second half there will be an interval of fifteen minutes for refreshments.”

CHAPTER X

THE ZAGABOG'S STORY

The next item of the programme was a dance of three hundred and fifty fairies. A fine stage appeared at one end of the banqueting-hall, and when the salmon-and-shrimp sun went out a curtain rose and the three hundred and fifty fairies appeared in companies of fifty.

The first company wore emeralds, and they glittered like dawn beating upon the foliage of the birches at a forest edge in Spring-time. The second company wore sapphires, and they shone like sunlight on the deep blue sea. The third company wore topaz, and they gleamed like honey through the comb, or the ripe corn-fields ready for harvest. The fourth company wore rubies, and they sparkled like

wine-red seaweed rippling through the fingers of the tide. The fifth company wore fire opals, and their loveliness was the loveliness of a kingfisher twinkling beside a river, or the loveliness of the northern streamers in an arctic sky, or the loveliness of the Mother of the Pearls. The sixth company wore sardonyx, and they moved in the tender light that comes at afterglow, or peeps from the scented hearts of the tea-roses. The seventh company wore diamonds, and blazed with the arches of rainbows and the dazzle of lightning and the cold frosty fire of the fixed stars.

As a mere detail, which may interest any of you who have money in the Post-Office Savings Bank, I may mention that all the gems worn in that dance of the seven companies were worth together exactly 100,100,400,100,700,300,800*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* But a matter of that kind is of no account to fairies, because they go and come through the gem-mines of the earth and never confuse value and beauty, or mistake one for the other, as we so often do.

The dance wound and turned and twisted and frisked and frolicked and sank and sprang up again, and splintered and mended and wandered and meandered and broke into new figures until the eyes of Charles and Unity ached at so much amazing colour. It continued for an hour, and sometimes one company rested and sometimes only one danced; and then, at the end, when the glorious ballet was done and the dance of the jewels had come to its close in slow throbbing music, produced by ten basso frogs croaking in time and tune—then each company parted from the next, and each took the shape of a letter; and the letters were

ZAGABOG.

So that was the end of the great dance, and the Zagabog declared how in all his experience of dancing he had never seen any dance that had pleased him better, and only a dozen or so that had pleased him as well. He congratulated the companies, and the dancing-

master and the dancing-mistress, and the artist fairy who had designed the dresses, and the artist fairies who had made them, and, in fact, everybody concerned.

Then happened a thing which looked unfortunate at first; but it turned out to be very fortunate indeed in the long run.

Several fairies whispered to the Snick and gravely shook their heads; so he rose and made an announcement.

“Your Majesties, Mr. Zagabog, ladies and gentlemen and beasts, our next item on the programme, which was to have concluded our entertainment, cannot, I regret to say, take place. The famous insect-tamer, Von Humboldt, had hoped to introduce his troupe of performing caterpillars to your notice; but owing to an unforeseen interference of Nature, his talented company have all turned into chrysalides during the night, and until they reappear in the shape of butterflies, which will not happen for a considerable time, he cannot give

us a performance. He much regrets your natural disappointment, but, as he very truly remarks, 'it can't be helped.' "

A sound of sorrow arose from the company, and some of the younger fairies even cried. But then the Zagabog beckoned to the Snick, and in a few moments the Snick addressed the company again.

"I am delighted to inform you that Mr. Zagabog himself has most generously and kindly consented to take the place of the performing caterpillars and tell us a story!"

Immense cheering greeted this good news, and the Zagabog stuck his cigar in the corner of his mouth so as not to interfere with his talking, winked his sea-green eyes thoughtfully once or twice, and then began:

"When I tell you that I am going to relate the true story of the Hare and the Tortoise, I know quite well what you'll say. You'll say 'We've heard it before'; but you haven't. However, even the youngest of us sometimes

make mistakes, and so I'll forgive you all. The true story is quite different from the one you know, and the moral is quite different, and, in fact, everything about it. And if you also tell me that you don't want to hear a story with a moral, then I can only beg you to excuse me this once, because I am rather old-fashioned, and, in my young days, we had morals to all our stories. But you can easily forget the moral again after you have heard it, and it isn't an uncomfortable moral, and, in fact, it wouldn't hurt a fly.

"Now first I must ask you to consider the subject of points. There are the points of mountains, and the points of tintacks, and the points of jokes, and so one. For every one of your senses there are points. Some you see, as the mountain; and some you feel, as the tintack; and some you smell, as the point of my cigar; and some you hear, as the point of a joke; and some you taste, as the point of a barley-sugar stick. But there are two points more important than any of these, and one we

have all got, and one we all ought to have. The point that we have all got is the point of our noses; and the point that we all ought to have is the Point of View. The Point of View is the most important of all points, and everybody should have his own in the first place, and everybody should be very tender to everybody else's Point of View in the second place, because a Point of View is always a tender thing.

"Which admirable reflection brings me to the true story of the Hare and the Tortoise.

"The hare was a jovial, rollicking chap, and full of fun. He did not think much of his own powers, and was always ready to credit other people with more skill and cleverness than he himself possessed. He had a good sense of humour, as modest people often have, and he enjoyed a joke as well as anybody. And he had a kind heart and a good store of sympathy for other creatures; and the creature with which he most sympathised was the tortoise. He was always cheering up the tortoise, and

praising his good points, and admiring the pattern of his shell, and so on; and sometimes he would stop from his own gambols for half an hour at a time just to talk with the tortoise, or put a little furniture polish on his back, or bring him some delicacy which grew too far away for the tortoise to reach it himself.

“Now the tortoise, I am sorry to say, was not a sympathetic character. He had been badly brought up, and he took narrow views of life, and was jealous and rather given to seeing the worst of people instead of the best. His real good qualities he hid carefully, but he paraded some rather silly little tricks and habits; and he had some wrong opinions and was rather bad form altogether. One of his wrongest opinions centred in the notion that he could run. But, of course, this was just the thing of all others that he could not do. If he had said that he was a champion sleeper nobody would have doubted it, for he might justly have prided himself on his powers in

that direction. He could tuck himself up in his own shell and go to sleep for six months; and that was rather wonderful, and he had a right to be proud of it. But like a good many other people who scorn their own sort of cleverness and claim another sort which they haven't got, the tortoise thought nothing of his great sleeping talents, but crawled about at the rate of a yard an hour and said that not the fox nor the hare nor the antelope nor the greyhound could keep up with him if he really liked to make haste.

"He quite believed this himself. You must give him credit for that. It seemed to him, as he waddled along, putting down each leg as slowly as the minute-hand of a big clock moves, that he was going at a fearful rate of speed. He had often passed a snail or a slug, and so he concluded that he was rattling along quicker than a seventy-horse-power motor-car; and when people chaffed him about it, he thought that this was their jealousy, and

got sulky and drew his head into his shell, and wouldn't come out again until the subject was changed or an apology had been offered.

"Then fell a day when the hare and his friends were having a talk about this silly idea of the tortoise; and the kind-hearted hare stuck up for him and said: 'Pray don't destroy his illusions. Consider what a wretched life he leads; remember his disadvantages. He has had no education; he has only seen about ten yards of the world; he is not a reader; he is not a thinker; he cares neither for music nor the drama; art means nothing to him; and his friends are like himself—small-hearted and pig-headed. He lives a cheerless, empty existence—a slow existence in every sense of the word. But the one bright spot in it is this grotesque idea that he is such a flyer. Don't laugh at him about it: it isn't kind. Let him go on thinking that he is the swiftest beast that runs. It doesn't do us any harm for him to think so, and it does him a deal of good. If he knew that he was almost the slowest of

all beasts, and almost the least interesting, he would lose his self-respect, and so his deadly, dull, creepy life would be deadlier and duller and creepier than ever.'

"Some people agreed with the hare and some did not; but a rumour of the conversation got to the tortoise, and he grew furious. Pity from a giddy worldly person like the hare was more than he could stand, though he might have been considered pretty thick-shelled over most things. But he lost his temper in this matter, and he also lost his judgment, with the result that he issued a challenge in the sporting papers to run the hare three miles level for a bunch of bananas a-side. The winner was to take both bunches and be called 'Champion Runner of all the Beasts.'

" 'Now,' said the fox to the hare, 'you've got him at your mercy, and I hope you'll show him, once for all, what an old fool he is. You could give him two miles and seventeen hundred and fifty yards and then beat him; and, though I don't eat bananas myself, I wish

you joy of both bunches, for win you must.'

"Well, the hare accepted the challenge, and he pretended to go into training and make terrific preparations for the struggle; but in his big and kind heart he had determined to let the tortoise win!

"'You see,' he said to his wife, who alone knew the secret, 'if the poor old beggar crawls home first, it will be the red-letter day of his life, and he'll have something to think of for evermore; and you know how fearfully long tortoises live. It will brighten up his future and be something for him to talk big about and tell his children a hundred years hence.'

"But the hare's wife did not agree with him. She had no sense of humour. She was a practical doe, and she thought that it would be foolish to lose a bunch of bananas for a silly piece of sentiment. However, the hare was firm, and he told his friends not to bet on him, because he meant to lose if he possibly could.

"And the tortoise went into training, too, and got himself into fine condition by eating

nothing but clover for a week. Then he asked a friend to time him, and he found that he could easily go ten yards in five minutes, so he considered the victory as good as won.

“All the beasts assembled to see the great race; and from here my story goes on rather like the one you know. Only now you have a different Point of View, and so understand the tale better than you did until this evening. Your Point of View was wrong. But I have put it right, and it will never go wrong again, I hope—not on this subject at any rate.

“The hare pretended there was plenty of time, and strolled about, and talked to friends, and nibbled a dandelion, and entered into an argument as to whether harriers or foxhounds could run the faster. Then he sat down and read the newspaper; then he attended a lecture on the rotation of crops; then he had a bath; then he enjoyed his lunch; and then he took a nap.

“Meanwhile the tortoise was thundering along at the rate of rather more than a hun-

dred yards an hour. He only knew the hare was behind him, and that was all he cared about, because if his opponent didn't get in front of course he couldn't win. The tortoise looked neither to the right nor to the left; but kept forward steadily day and night, while his friends fed him with mustard and cress every half-hour. As for the hare, he spent a week-end with relations on the other side of the county; and from time to time the fox brought him word how the tortoise was getting on. In a fortnight, or rather more, it got about that the tortoise would soon be ripping home. Then the hare had his hair cut, was measured for three new suits of clothes, gave a bridge party, wrote up his diary, took the chair at a meeting to abolish jugging and red-currant jelly, and one morning sauntered down to the starting-point of the race.

"The fox trotted up and explained that the tortoise had still fifty yards to finish, so the hare chatted for a few minutes longer; then he changed his clothes, put on his running draw-

ers and his spiked shoes, kissed his family, asked one or two riddles, played a couple of games of lawn-tennis with his daughters, and finally started. He ran slowly as he possibly could, and with the greatest difficulty, by pretending to fall lame, he managed to be beaten by a length. And the length was the length of the tortoise, not the hare.

“After the race the tortoise fainted, and he only recovered when they played ‘See the conquering hero comes’ into his ear. He was pleased, but not in the least surprised at his victory. And that is the end of the true story of the Hare and the Tortoise.”

Three cheers were given for the Zagabog, and the Snick hurried forward with another match and re-lighted the Zagabog's cigar, which had gone out.

Then, louder than the chirrup of the fairies, came the clear voice of Unity from her seat at the table.

“I wonder,” she said, “what happened afterwards?”

"Nothing happened afterwards, because that's the end of the story," answered De Quincey; but the Zagabog, whose ears were very sharp, heard the question, and it rather pleased him.

"Human girl," he said, "nobody within my knowledge has ever asked before what happened afterwards. I consider it an excellent question, and I shall be delighted to answer it."

The Snick cried "Hush! hush! Order for Mr. Zagabog!" and then the Zagabog went on again.

"After the tortoise had won the race and got back his breath, which took a week, he began boasting and bragging of his amazing victory, and he couldn't see for a moment that the hare had let him win out of pure kindness. But he made so much noise and gave himself so many airs that at last the fox, observing what an ungrateful idiot the tortoise was in this matter, thought he might win a little advantage to himself out of it. And he challenged the

tortoise to another race, for five pounds a-side and a champagne lunch; and, much to his joy, the tortoise instantly accepted. 'If I can beat the hare, I can beat the fox,' said the tortoise very grandly. 'He may just as well give me five pounds and order the champagne lunch, and have done with it.'

"Now we know what was the hare's Point of View when he let the tortoise win; but the fox took quite a different Point of View, and a much more usual one. His rule in life was to get all he could out of everybody always, and he never allowed himself time to consider other people's feelings or anything of that sort. You see, there was no poetry or nobility about the fox's mind. He was not a gentleman at heart, but merely a smart fox of business. So when they gave the signal to start he did start; and all the tortoise saw was a streak of cinnamon-coloured light with a white tip behind, like the lamp on the end of a train. It slipped along at the rate of about a hundred miles an hour; and before the tortoise had

fairly got into his stride, he was told that he might stop again and go home and order the champagne lunch, because the fox had won. So, you see, when the human girl asked to know what happened afterwards, she asked something that was quite worth knowing."

The Zagabog smiled at Unity and she smiled back, and the fairies made more fuss than ever about her, finding that she was clever as well as beautiful.

Then there was a whisper that the time had come for the ices; but before they arrived, the Snick, who, though perhaps a little vain, was highly conscientious, hurried up to the Zagabog and whispered in his ear.

"Pardon me; you've forgotten the Moral!"

The Zagabog seemed rather sorry to be reminded about the Moral; but he knew the Snick was right, and so he called for silence and told them the Moral of his Story.

"The Moral, of course, is that you must always try to see their Point of View before you criticise anybody. Histories are crammed full

of unkind things, and silly things, and untrue things—why? Because the people who write them so often will not try to see or feel any Point of View but their own. And so our good, amiable hare has been quite misunderstood for thousands of years; and the tortoise, too. False history has been written about them, just because nobody knew the Point of View. So mind that you look out always for the Point of View and help people to see yours, too, if you want them to understand you.”

I'm afraid nobody paid much attention to the Moral, except Charles and De Quincey and the King of the Fairies. And even they soon ceased to think about it when the ices came in.

CHAPTER XI

THE SAD STRANGER

After the ices Ship, who was not interested in them, came and pulled Unity's speedwell dress, and, I regret to say, tore it rather badly. He looked anxious, and it was quite clear that he remembered the time better than Unity or her brother. So Charles inquired of De Quincey whether he might be permitted to ask the Zagabog his question now, and De Quincey asked the Snick, and the Snick asked the Zagabog, and the Zagabog said:

"Delighted."

He was always ready to oblige a human boy.

Charles walked up the room and bowed very properly to the King and the Queen and the



“The Snick is consulting my volumes of ‘Who’s Who’ ”

Zagabog. Then he told them how much his father had changed, and how nice he used to be and how nasty he was. Charles went on to explain about the Meeting and about the gift, and he asked if the Zagabog would be so very kind as to decide what this gift had better be.

The Zagabog heard him patiently and then spoke.

"What is your father's name?" he inquired.

"Billy Jago, please, sir," answered Charles.

The Zagabog turned to the Snick and said:

"Look up William Jago!"

And the Snick bowed, rose, and hurried to a large pile of bright red books in a corner of the hall.

"The Snick is consulting my volumes of 'Who's Who,'" explained the Zagabog. "Needless to say, I never travel without them. Everybody is mentioned. I am told that an earthly volume which goes by the same name is very incomplete; and the excuse is that they never put in anybody who is not somebody.

But this is no excuse at all; in fact, it is nonsense, because everybody is somebody, and I challenge anybody to deny it."

Of course nobody could.

The Snick turned up the J's and found Mr. William Jago. He then brought the volume which contained Billy's doings to the Zagabog; and the Zagabog read it and shook his head rather sadly.

"That rascally friend of mine, the Thunder Spirit—what a hot-headed boy he is still! To think that Phutt and Fum—"

Here he broke off, and the fairies all stared and kept silence, because they knew not what was in the Zagabog's mind.

He thought for a moment; then he shut the book, gave it back to the Snick, and spoke.

"This it not a case for a gift," he said to Charles. "In fact, quite the contrary. You mustn't give your father anything. You must take something away from him."

"Oh, dear!" said Charles. "He won't like that. He never parts with anything now."

"He need know nothing about it," explained the Zagabog. "In an old waistcoat of your father which hangs on a nail in an outhouse at Merripit Farm there is a Flint Heart. Get rid of that, and all will be well."

"Thank you very, very much, sir," said Charles; "and I should like to say that my sister and me are terrible obliged to you and to everybody, and we bid you a very good-night; and if ever 'tis in our power to do anything for the pixies, I hope they'll tell us what 'tis."

"Capital!" said the King.

"Nicely spoken," declared the Queen.

Then Unity, just as she was being taken away by the fairies to put on her own frock again, said—very loudly:

"I wonder if I might kiss the Zagabog?"

The Snick hurried forward: he was evidently rather shocked.

"Hush! hush!" he said. "I hope to goodness he didn't hear you! The Zagabog never kisses anybody, and only very great people in-

deed are allowed to kiss *him*. And even then only the tip of his little finger!"

But the amiable old pre-Cambrian Zagabog hated all this fuss.

"Come here, human girl, and kiss me!" he said.

And, of course, Unity went; and the Zagabog picked her up in his hairy paws and kissed her; and she looked into his green eyes and saw that they were really a pair of the most wonderful opera-glasses, through which she beheld all the past and all the present and all the future at once.

Of course, she didn't understand much that she saw; but even the little she did understand was something, and it helped to make her the cleverest girl on Dartmoor when she grew up. It is only children of five or less that are allowed to look into the Zagabog's eyes, fortunately; for if grown-up people were permitted a peep, I don't know what might happen.

So that great night came to an end, and

Charles and Unity and Ship departed; De Quincey bade them a friendly farewell, and his Secretary said the charm, so that all three became their natural size again before they set off home under a night of moonshine and stars.

It was beautiful in the woods, and the white spears of the moon goddess trembled high and low and turned all the young leaves quite grey; and where the hawthorn shone the moonbeams rested from their dancing and made most wonderful patterns of pure silver in glade and dingle.

All the party went silently along; and it seemed so still and cold and lonely that they began to get rather low-spirited before they reached Merripit. Charles tried once or twice to speak cheerfully, but he felt a lump in his throat, and so did Unity, and so did Ship; though I believe, between ourselves, that the lump in *his* throat was only because he'd eaten too many good things at the party.

Presently an owl began to hoot, and the

sound was so horribly sad that Unity broke down altogether and sobbed and said:

“I won-won-won-won-wonder if we couldn’t go back and ask the dear Zag-zag-zag-abog to let us live with him instead of father.”

But Charles, when he found Unity so sad, braced himself up to comfort her. He didn’t understand why they were miserable, and thought it strange, whereas it was the most natural thing in the world. Because, after an extra good time, nine people out of ten always do feel a little bit miserable, especially if they know the extra good time is never coming back again. And that really is the worst of extra good times—that they never do come again somehow; and therefore many people—though they are probably wrong—prefer not to have extra good times at all, because of the rather horrid feeling afterwards.

But now they met somebody who was more miserable than themselves.

Suddenly Ship rushed into the hedge, near another farm on their way home to Merripit,

and began barking fiercely. Then a very strange wheezy voice—rather like ginger-beer overflowing from a bottle—said:

“Spare me! Don’t, don’t make any more holes in me—or I shall be utterly dished and done for!”

Charles called Ship to heel, and then he and Unity went to the hedge and found a mournful but exceedingly odd and unexpected object there. The thing was lying in the attitude of that famous ancient statue known as “The Dying Gaul”; but it was not a Gaul, and both Charles and Unity hoped that it was not dying, though it looked very ill. Its body was oblong and pale grey. It had legs and arms, about as thick as straws, and its nose evidently screwed on to the rest of its sad face. This nose was round and made of brass, which glittered in the moonlight. The unhappy thing supported itself on one arm, and there was an ugly hole in its side.

“Who are you?” asked Charles.

Then, much to his amazement, the creature

replied in poetry. Afterwards he found that when it was excited the stranger always spoke in verse; but he did not know that yet, and was therefore surprised; and so was his sister.

Thus spoke the mournful object:

“Oh, I am a poor old thing,
And when my tale you hear,
Your handkerchief will wring
With many a bitter tear.
Alas, alas! for my nose of brass,
And alas! for my blighted career.

“But once I was young and bright,
And gay and full of cheer;
Now I’m a regular fright,
And tattered and torn and queer.
Alas, alas! for my nose of brass,
And alas! for my blighted career.”

After this amazing object sat up and began to talk in the usual way.

“My wretched tale is soon told,” he said. “In a word, I am an india-rubber hot-water bottle. I was made in Germany and sold in London. A lady, who suffered from cold feet,



"Who are you?" asked Charles

bought me, and I always went to bed with her and warmed her toes. She came to Dartmoor last year and stopped at yonder farmhouse. And when she went away again and returned to the metropolis, she left me behind. Why she forgot me I shall never know, but I think she must have gone out of her senses. The fault, at any rate, cannot be put down to me. I was in good working order then!"

He broke off, sighed, and proceeded:

"The farmer's wife soon found out my virtues, and even the farmer himself did not disdain to avail himself of my genial society on cold nights. In fact, I always went to bed with them. They had no children, and you might almost say, without straining the truth, that they adopted me. At least, that was my firm impression. But I had a weak spot, and it proved my ruin. On one fatal night, when I was fuller than usual with hotter water than usual, I met with a sad accident and lost both my home and my friends. The friendship, indeed, was but a selfish sham. It could not

stand the strain of my unfortunate collapse. They only cared for their comfort, not for me.

“It was undoubtedly the coldest night of the year, and we three had all settled down together as usual, when, without an instant’s warning, I burst. . . . I trust I am not wearying you?” broke off the poor hot-water bottle very politely.

“Not at all,” said Charles. “Your story is most exciting.”

“I burst,” repeated the hot-water bottle. “I would have warned them if I could, but it was impossible. There was no time to do so. Besides, they had both just gone off comfortably to sleep. In an instant appeared this hideous rent in my side, and the bed was flooded with water about one degree less than at the boiling-point. It would require the pencil of a Hogarth to depict the scene that followed. The farmer’s wife, badly scalded, leapt from her couch under the impression that the dwelling was on fire; her husband, also suffering

from considerable surface burns, awoke at the same moment. But his intellect moved more quickly, and he perceived in an instant what had occurred. With language which I will not repeat he bounded from the bed, struck a light, seized me by the throat, and dragged me out. At first I fondly thought that he was going to attend to my injuries before he concerned himself with his own; but, alas! I was terribly mistaken. He carried me, still dripping, to the window, opened it, and hurled me forth into twenty degrees of frost! I have seen neither the man nor his wife since that dreadful night, nor do I wish to see them. No one has come to my rescue; and I live here—if one may call it living—while the mice nibble me, the birds peck me, the thorns stick into me. For pity's sake carry me with you back to civilisation. I implore you, if you have hearts!"

The poor wretch rose and fell upon its knees before them. But Ship, knowing with a dog's instinct that there was trouble in store, kept pulling at Unity's frock to come on.

"I wonder," she said to the hot-water bottle, "if we could mend you?"

"You might," he answered. "You might try. An operation might save me. At any rate, you would find me useful in your games. I would try to play, though I don't feel much like sport. Anything, however, would be better than the society in this hedge."

"Come, then," answered Charles; and the bottle, with a gurgle of hearty thanksgiving, collected his remaining strength and leapt into the boy's arms. In this position, however, he was not comfortable, so Charles doubled him up and put the poor soul into his pocket.

Then he and Unity set off running for home. Already the dawn was glimmering over the Moor, the moonlight was dead, and the cuckoo had begun to call sleepily from the "Cuckoo Rock"—his favourite perch—near Merripit Farm. In the yard the children met their father and John, who was grown up. Both were in a great fright, and when they saw Charles and Unity and Ship they relieved their

feelings by being fearfully cross with all three.

Mr. Jago took Charles and cuffed his ears till they were redder than the sky; then he opened a stable-door and thrust him in; and then he whipped Unity, I am sorry to say, and pushed her into the stable after Charles. He locked them both up there, and told them they need not expect any breakfast or dinner or tea that day. Meanwhile, John had kicked Ship very cruelly into his kennel. After that, father and son went back to bed again, and Billy Jago told his anxious wife that the children had come back and were locked up in the stable.

But though Charles and Unity felt rather sad about such a harsh welcome and such a frosty end to their adventures, they did not mind much, because they knew that their Point of View was good.

"To-morrow," said Charles, "we will get the Flint Heart out of father's waistcoat, and when once it has gone, everything will be all right, no doubt."

The old cart-horse in the stable was lying

down fast asleep, and Unity and Charles went close to him and soon slept with their heads on his stomach. And the poor, impossible, and too ridiculous ruin of a hot-water bottle felt the genial glow of Charles, and it reminded him of the good old days, and he put his brass nose out of the breast pocket of Charles and said:

“Warmth—warmth—there is nothing like warmth, after all!”

Then he, too, slept, and dreamed of his pride and importance in the happy, happy past, when he was sold for seven-and-six and began life by bringing joy and comfort to an elderly lady.

CHAPTER XII

THE RECOVERY OF MR. JAGO

The next day Mr. Jago relented a little, owing to his wife's remonstrances; and though Charles and Unity had no breakfast, they were released and allowed to come to dinner.

His parents and John, who was grown up, didn't believe a word of the story that Charles told them, and yet it was all true enough. But he did not say anything about the Flint Heart and the waistcoat till the next Meeting; and then he explained what must be done, and introduced the hot-water bottle to the family.

Soon afterwards, when the farm was quiet and nobody about, Charles looked for the old waistcoat and found it.

He could not help feeling very excited at the moment when he put his hand into the pocket and touched the chilly and hard face of the

Flint Heart. He looked at it, to see that there was no mistake, and then, as somebody was hastening along the passage, he slipped the charm into his own pocket and went off.

Of course, Charles knew what a horribly dangerous thing he had got, and made all haste to be rid of it again. He felt as if he was carrying dynamite, or gunpowder, or some equally touchy and explosive compound. But to get the Flint Heart from his father was one thing; to get rid of it was quite another. He decided to speak to Unity in private, and presently he met her watching the ducks in the river not far off.

Charles shouted roughly to her:

"Come here, and be sharp about it!"

She was astonished at the tone of his voice, but went instantly.

"Don't stare," he said, "but just attend to me, and speak sense if you can. I've got the Flint Heart in my pocket. What shall I do with it?"

"I wonder," said Unity; and Charles was so

irritable and peppery and unlike himself, that he took his small sister by the shoulders and shook her. Ship happened to be passing by, and he could not stand this, so he came forward and looked at Charles with his blue eyes and showed his teeth and growled.

"Would you, you cur!" cried Charles, and he picked up a great stone to throw at Ship.

Then Unity said:

"I wonder if you hadn't better fling away that Flint Heart, brother Charles, before it makes you any worse?"

And Charles struggled against the horrid heart, and dragged it out of his pocket and threw it away with all his might. It fell into the river; but it was flat, and it went ducking-and-draking all along a smooth pool and then jumped the bank and fell plump into a reedy swamp beyond. It was a place where green and pink and yellow bog moss grew, and the cruel little sundew, that catches flies with its leaves, and the butterwort with sticky foliage also, and the bog pimpernel, and other very

pretty things that like to live with their feet in the water.

"So much for that!" cried Charles. "It's gone! It'll trouble nobody any more. Forgive me, Unity. Forgive me, Ship! What a brute of a thing it is!"

"I wonder what you'd have been like if you'd kept it very long?" said Unity.

"I should have got worse and worse," declared Charles.

"I wonder how the hot-water bottle would have liked it?" said Unity.

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Charles. "He is better as he is—though as he's so low-spirited it might perhaps have done him good."

"I wonder how De Quincey would have liked it?" said Unity.

"It would have made him rather conceited," declared Charles. "And he would have ordered the others about and very likely got into trouble with the King and Queen."

"I wonder how the Snick would have liked it?" said Unity.

"The Snick was quite important enough without it," answered Charles. "As a matter of fact I shouldn't be surprised if he's got one."

"I wonder how the Zagabog would have liked it?" said Unity.

"It wouldn't have made any difference to him," replied Charles. "If he'd had a string of Flint Hearts round his neck they wouldn't have made him unkind. He couldn't be."

As they spoke Billy Jago appeared beside the river, and Unity was about to fly, for the children never faced their father now if it could be helped. But Charles held her hand.

"Don't go," he said. "Trust the Zagabog. If he was right, then father will be the same good old father he always was, now the Flint Heart has gone."

Charles called to Ship, who was sneaking off under the hedge and hoping that Mr. Jago would not see him and whistle. But he came to Charles, and all three boldly walked to meet the master of Merripit Farm.

And the first thing he did was to pick up

Unity and rub his bristly yellow chin against her cheek and kiss her! She had not been kissed since the Zagabog kissed her, and she looked into her father's eyes and hoped they would be telescopes too; but they weren't, and she saw nothing of the past and nothing of the present and nothing of the future; but she saw a very kind, gentle expression, and heard Mr. Jago say:

"Well, my little, purty, tibby lamb, have 'e come for to meet father and fetch him home to dinner? And a ride you shall have for your trouble, so you shall."

He carried her on his arm, and with great rejoicing they all went home together—Billy and his daughter in the middle and Charles on his right and Ship on his left.

When Mrs. Jago saw them coming she called to Mary and said:

"Oh, my Guy Fawkes! be that father carrying Unity, or have my eyes gone mazed?"

And Mary said:

“Ess fay, he’s carrying Unity, sure enough, and he’s making jokes by the look of it, for Charles be laughing fit to crack his cheeks!”

Dinner was late, and Billy Jago didn’t mind in the least. The family all stared at him, as if he was a stranger; but the happy truth was that the stranger had gone and the real, kind, laughing Billy had returned.

John—I ought to have mentioned that he was grown up—seemed the only one who was a little bit sorry, for since Billy had possessed the Flint Heart it could not be denied that he had got on in the world wonderfully. The only bright side to the change was that he had put quite a lot of money into the bank; but Mrs. Jago felt that, after all, though money is useful, it isn’t as useful as a good-tempered and kind-hearted husband.

“What about that field down by the river?” she asked, just to see if Billy still felt the same to other people, or if he had changed all round.

He thought a moment and answered:

“Well, old Thomas Gollop wants it more than I do, and it was certainly promised to him. I meant to offer a bit more for it and cut him out; but I sha’n’t. He can have it.”

So you see Billy was changed in every way; and though it took the people a good long time to believe it, yet when he gave ten huge plum-cakes to the parish school treat and went himself and played “Hunt the Slipper” with the children; and when he asked men to forgive him for having been unkind, and women to forgive him for having been rude, and children to forgive him for having been rough, and so on, and so on, of course everybody began to see that he really had changed and was just the old easy-going Billy that he used to be. He didn’t make nearly so much money, but he made more friends; and whatever he may have thought about it, there was no doubt what Mrs. Jago and Mary and Ted and Charles and the twins and Unity and the baby and Ship thought. None of them cared a bit about money, and were only too glad to have the head

of the house back again instead of the grumpy monster that had taken his place.

Only one sad thing occurred at this time to spoil the general joy, and the sorrow was felt by none but Charles and Unity.

When they had time to do so, they turned their attention to the poor india-rubber hot-water bottle. He had been left hanging on a nail in a dark corner of the stable, and now Charles brought him down and went into the question of mending him.

Naturally the bottle was deeply interested and wanted Charles to send him back to Germany. He said:

"I do not wish to suggest that you couldn't mend me beautifully, Charles. I have every confidence in you and Unity. But I have suffered internally in many ways. It is a complicated case, and I shall require the most careful handling if I am ever to be restored to health and usefulness."

But Charles was firm.

"It is quite out of the question," he answered.

"To send you to Germany is impossible. I don't even know where Germany is. We will do our best for you, and we can do no more."

The bottle gave his sad wheezy sigh and said that he left himself in the hands of Charles.

"Do your best," he answered.

"I wonder if sticking-plaster—?" suggested Unity. "We have it on our fingers if we cut ourselves."

"By all means try it," said the bottle; "but I doubt if it is good enough."

"If it's good enough for us, it ought to be good enough for you," said Charles, rather warmly.

But the bottle explained that he didn't mean that at all.

"Without doubt it is good enough," he answered. "Indeed, it may be *too* good for a poor, friendless, battered wretch like me. My fear is that it won't stick me together."

And time proved the bottle was only too right. Nothing that Charles or Unity could think of answered the purpose of healing the

poor fellow. They tried sticking-plaster, and stamp-paper, and gum and glue, and even sealing-wax, which hurt the bottle horribly, but he bore it without a tear. Yet all these things only made the hole in his side worse, if anything, and at last he begged the children to make no further experiments.

"I can stand no more," he said. "Let me hang on my nail in peace. I thank you from a full heart for your praiseworthy efforts to bring a little sunshine into my life. But we must wait until you grow older and cleverer. You say that wise men sometimes come here to stop in the summer months. If any arrive presently, speak with them and endeavour to interest them in my case. Meanwhile do not let my sorrows make you sad. Go on your way and be happy and forget me for the present."

Charles and Unity tried to do what he told them; but they did not forget him, which was very fortunate indeed, for, though you might suppose that a broken-down hot-water bottle

could make little stir in the world and was really not likely to be of any great use again, yet you would be quite mistaken to think so. Because this is a fairy story, and in any real fairy story nothing happens that you expect and everything happens that you don't expect. Therefore, as you don't expect to hear any more of the hot-water bottle, you very soon will hear more of him. In fact, I should never have brought him into the story at all if I had meant to leave him hanging for ever and ever on a nail in the corner of a dark stable.

Still he must hang there for a little while, just as the Flint Heart must lie in the bog by the river for a little while. But one thing I promise you: the bottle and the Flint Heart will meet before you or they are much older; and when they do, I hope I shall be able to write about such a great event properly.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GRAND SEPTUOR

About six weeks after Mr. Billy Jago got well, Charles, having a holiday, determined to visit the Pixies' Holt. He hardly expected to see a fairy again, but he wanted to thank De Quincey and tell him that the Zagabog's advice had worked very splendidly indeed. So he wrote a letter addressed to "Mr. De Quincey, Esquire, Poet," and started off to fling it into the Holt.

"Then," thought Charles, "somebody will be sure to find it and give it to him."

It was a nice letter, well expressed and well spelt, for Charles had taken great trouble with it; but De Quincey never received it, and this is the reason why.

Charles reached the Holt on a day in Au-

gust, and the bluebells were, of course, all dead and gone, but some good foxgloves had taken their places; and the first thing that Charles saw when he arrived was De Quincey himself, trying on foxgloves. Most men fairies wear foxglove hats in the Summer season of the year. In fact, it is not considered very good form to wear anything else from the twentieth of June until the thirty-first of August; so De Quincey, who had just discarded his last hat, was trying on new ones, and he had found a foxglove that fitted perfectly as Charles arrived.

"I was bringing a letter for you," said the visitor.

"You ought to have brought it sooner," answered De Quincey. "However, 'better late than never' is a good saying, and I am the last person to expect gratitude from a human boy. If you should ever be invited to dinner again, remember to *call within the week*."

"I will, and I'm sorry I didn't know better," answered Charles humbly.

"You can't say more," replied the fairy, "and it is rather remarkable to hear you say as much. Many people are angry when they make a mistake, but very few people have the sense also to be sorry."

"I hope the music of English prose is going on pretty well," said Charles.

"Don't talk about it," answered De Quincey. "The ancient fires of course still burn, and they are immortal; but there is nothing new—no fresh fuel, if you understand me."

Charles didn't, so he changed the subject.

"My father has quite recovered. I am sure you will be glad to hear that," he said.

"The King wants to see you," said De Quincey, showing no interest in Billy Jago.

"The King!" exclaimed Charles.

"Yes," answered De Quincey. "The story is a long one, but such is my command of language that I shall be able to unfold it in three sentences. Observe the construction of them, and the harmony with which each will flow out of the last."

"I will, if I'm clever enough," answered Charles.

"In a word, when you flung away the Flint Heart, it finally reposed upon a bank of wild asphodel beyond the river. Passing that way by night, the Jacky Toad known as Marsh Galloper chanced upon the charm, and, with that low cunning denied to no member of his species, perceived its terrific qualities, possessed himself of the Flint Heart, and, by its aid, speedily lifted himself to a position of intolerable importance. He has marshalled the dusky legions of the Jacky Toads in revolt against Fairyland proper; he has openly defied and flouted the Reigning House; his trumpets have sounded for revolution; and his banners bear these shameful words, '*Down with the Veto.*' Even the royal Jacky Toad bodyguard is on the point of rebellion."

"I'm very sorry there is any trouble," said Charles.

"Already we have fought three pitched bat-

bles, and it is idle to pretend that we got the best of them," continued De Quincey. "Marsh Galloper was practically unknown until a month ago, but now, with the Flint Heart and his friend Fire Drake to help him, the wretched hobgoblin is proving a very ugly customer indeed. Of course something must be done. We can't have a long civil war. So the King wants to see you. His words were, 'Send for Charles.' "

"I'm afraid that I sha'n't be any use," said Charles.

"Probably not," answered De Quincey; "but, as the Zagabog used to say, 'everything comes in useful once in a hundred years'; and this may be your chance. He has, of course, gone on his majestic rounds—I mean the great Zagabog—but, after the third battle, and when about six of our leading generals had been recalled in disgrace, the King sent a message by wireless telegraphy to the Zagabog, who is now in Timbuctoo, and the Zagabog has re-

plied to the message; and the King is very anxious that you shall hear what the Zagabog said."

"I shall be most interested," answered Charles.

"Come on, then," replied De Quincey; and he touched the right boot of Charles, repeated the magic word, and reduced the visitor to fairy size in a twinkling.

Then Charles remarked that all the flowers were arranged in rows and danced on spiders' threads in a way quite invisible to a full-sized human being.

"Good gracious! you're having a flower-show!" said Charles.

De Quincey showed impatience.

"On the contrary, it's washing day," he answered. Then he pointed to some tiny but exquisite petticoats that glittered and flashed on a gossamer and looked like liquid silver fluttering there.

"Her Majesty's," explained De Quincey. "They are made from the petals of the rarest

flower on Dartmoor. I refer to the Mount Ida whortleberry which grows on Fur Tor. Now come on."

In the entrance-hall Charles stopped again, entranced by the most lovely music that he had ever heard; and this time when he asked what it might mean De Quincey showed less impatience.

"It is the private royal orchestra rehearsing," he said. "They are about to run through a little thing of mine. It is to be sung at Court to-morrow night; and the concert will conclude with the Grand Septuor—Beethoven, Op. 20 in E flat. You know it, of course?"

"I'm afraid I don't," answered Charles. "But I should like to hear a song of yours, I'm sure, if it's half as beautiful as the Zaga-bog song."

"It is more beautiful, but not so learned," answered the poet.

The musicians, who had apparently been waiting for him, stopped playing. Then, after

a few words from De Quincey, they picked up their instruments again and prepared to start. A tiny lady songstress took her place before them, with a wee sheet of music in her hand, and after a few bars had been played, she sang this song:

“Where bluebells are tinkling a fairy tune
In the ear of sleeping night,
Where dewdrops laugh at the man in the moon
And shiver with stolen light;
When the busy old world that works by day
Slumbers softly in dreamland far away—
'Tis then that we dance and sing and play
Under the moon, the golden moon,
Where bluebells are tinkling, tinkling, tink-
ling—
Bluebells are tinkling a fairy tune.

“Where Will-o'-the-wisp glides over the fen
To gaze upon fairy charms;
Where shadowy mists from the haunted glen
Are waving their silver arms;
Where winds of the night from a woodland
bring
The scent of the forest on silent wing—
'Tis there that we dance and play and sing



All the musicians went off save seven and the conductor

Under the moon, the golden moon,
Where bluebells are tinkling, tinkling, tink-
ling—

Bluebells are tinkling a fairy tune.”

“There,” said De Quincey, “what d’you think of that?”

“It’s lovely,” answered Charles. “It’s far and away the most beautiful song I’ve ever heard, though of course I’ve not heard many.”

“Never qualify praise,” replied the poet. “It’s the best thing you ever heard. No need to say more.”

“Do let me hear it over again,” begged Charles; but De Quincey refused to allow this.

“Encores never take place at a rehearsal,” he said. “Now you can listen to a part of the Grand Septuor; then we must go to the King.”

All the musicians went off save seven and the conductor. Their instruments were very beautiful and wonderful. For instance, the big fiddle was the empty shell of a shard-borne beetle strung with spiders’ web; and the first violin consisted of an empty beech-nut, which

made the loveliest music for a fairy's ear. The biggest of the wind instruments was fashioned out of a small snail-shell; but whether it was a clarinet, or oboe, or what, I am not musician enough to say.

Charles listened to the wonderful Grand Septuor; and since the rendering was very fine and quite out of the common in every way, even De Quincey made no haste to go forward to Court.

"Of course I don't understand it," admitted Charles; "but it's beautiful. Even I know that much."

"I have always regretted," replied De Quincey, "that we have had no fairy composer who could be considered in the class of Beethoven. Musicians we can boast in plenty, but none, between ourselves, quite equal to setting my words to music; so I always have to do it myself."

Then he went over to the conductor of the orchestra.

"A pleasing and sound performance," he

said. "Perhaps a little more fire in the *allegro* and a thought more delicacy in the *andante* are indicated. And the 'cello appears to be slightly rheumatic in his bow elbow. But these are trifles. The Grand Septuor may be considered ready for the Court Concert."

The conductor thanked De Quincey and said that he was proud to have pleased him. Then Charles and his guide hastened off to Court.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ZAGABOG'S MESSAGE

The King shook hands and treated his visitor with great kindness. He was not so vain as De Quincey and not so pleased with himself. In fact, his manners simply smothered De Quincey's.

"You are very welcome," he said, "though I am afraid you cannot help us as much as you would wish to do. Mr. De Quincey will have told you what has happened."

"Yes, Your Majesty," answered Charles. "He tells me that the Jacky Toads have rebelled and are up in arms against Fairyland."

"It is true," answered the King. "They are led by a very powerful and, I fear, unprincipled person called Marsh Galloper, and the case is so serious that I have sent special wireless messages to the Zagabog about it."

If you will allow me, I will tell you what he says."

"I shall be delighted," declared Charles.

The King summoned his Reader of Despatches, and, while he was coming, he said:

"The Jacky Toads want to abolish the Veto, and, for my part, I should be disposed to let them try it; but we have a Conservative Government in for the moment, and my Prime Minister won't hear of the experiment."

Then the reader arrived and recited the Zagabog's message.

"In reply to your telegram, I have consulted my 'Who's Who,' and so gathered all particulars of the Jacky Toad, Marsh Galloper. His education has been neglected, and it must begin immediately. But first you will have to catch him, and this can only be done with the help of three things:

"1. A human boy.

"2. A human girl.

"3. A hot-water bottle made in Germany.

"When found, leave the rest to them.

"Hoping this reaches you as it leaves me at present, I remain, my dear King, your friend and well-wisher,

"ZAGABOG."

"Now," said the King, after his Reader had bowed and departed, "you see exactly how I am placed. We want first a human boy who will help us, secondly a human girl who will help us, and thirdly and lastly a hot-water bottle made in Germany who will help us. I have not the pleasure of knowing any human boys but you, or human girls but your sister; and I do not know a single hot-water bottle made in Germany. But if I can get you and Unity to help me, that at least will be very satisfactory for a start."

"We shall be only too proud to help you, I'm sure," said Charles.

"So far so good then. 'Well begun is half done,' as the proverb says. And now, as to the



The reader then recited the Zagabog's message

great question of the hot-water bottle. It is here that our difficulties will begin."

"I know a hot-water bottle, fortunately," declared Charles. "In fact, you might say that he is my friend."

"Be careful!" murmured De Quincey. "It is a most unlikely thing that you are telling us!"

"I promise you it's true!" answered Charles. "You can come and see him for yourself, if you like."

"But not made in Germany?" suggested the King. "Surely not made in Germany?"

"He really was, King—he said so himself," declared Charles. "Unity and me saved him from a terrible fate, and tried to mend him. He is badly wounded, but is very cheerful, considering."

"Would he help?" asked the King. "As he is a foreigner, I should not have asked him, because this is a purely personal matter belonging to my own Empire, and it lies entirely

between a section of my subjects and myself. However, you have heard what the Zagabog says."

"I'm perfectly sure he will help," replied Charles. "He would do anything that he could, because I tried so hard to mend him. He was only *made* in Germany, but he came to England at once afterwards. A great many things, and even people, come to England from Germany when they are old enough to have sense. The bottle has lived all his life in England."

"A naturalised subject. So much the better. Then everything is comfortably settled," said the King. "I have complete confidence in you, in your sister, and in the bottle; and after you have restored peace and order in my kingdom, you may all come to Court, and we will have one of our great nights; and your sister shall choose ten courses of the banquet and you shall choose ten. The audience is ended."

The King bowed to Charles and shook

hands again. Then De Quincey began to lead the visitor away.

"But," cried Charles, "please, please tell me what I am to do. I know nothing about it yet!"

The King seemed surprised and even a little bit hurt.

"You surely cannot have listened to what the Zagabog said?" he asked. "After minute directions he adds these important words: '*When found, leave the rest to them.*' So there you are. I have found you and I shall leave the rest to you. The Zagabog knows everything, and so he knows best. The secret of my own great success as a King has always been that I find the right fairy for each task and then don't interfere with him. Am I not right, De Quincey?"

The poet bowed.

"Quite right, Your Majesty," he answered; "and another of your many virtues is punctuality. You may not be aware of it, but the nation sets its clocks by you, well knowing

that the moment you leave the palace gates for your morning drive is precisely, exactly, and invariably one minute past seven o'clock A. M."

"I was not aware of it," replied the monarch; "but none the less am I gratified to learn the fact."

Then De Quincey and Charles were about to go backwards from the royal presence; but the King himself stopped them.

"One thing I must command," he said. "Please see that the famous 'Night-Piece' is sung to Charles before he departs. He must be taught to sing it perfectly, for it is the greatest charm we have against naughty night-fairies, and night-creatures in general. See that he has it by heart before he enters upon his dangerous undertaking."

De Quincey and Charles now retired and the pixy explained all about the "Night-Piece."

"There was a man called Robin Herrick," he said; "and he lived long ago in Devonshire—only a few miles from this very place—and, after Shakespeare, he knew more about pixies

than almost anybody. He was a poet; and he loved us and understood us; and he wrote a very beautiful song which we always sing before any great adventure by night. My voice is not what it was; but it is very highly trained and cultivated, and my taste and delivery are so perfect that I often give much more pleasure than better singers who lack my marvellous poetic feeling. Therefore I will sing you the 'Night-Piece' and help you to commit it to memory."

So, when they had got outside the Holt, De Quincey mounted a pebble under a fern-frond and Charles sat down on an old up-turned acorn-cup and listened to one of the loveliest, daintiest, quaintest, sweetest fairy songs that heart of man ever made in a joyful moment, or pen of man in a joyful moment set down.

The Night-piece.

I.

"Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,
The Shooting Starres attend thee;
And the Elves also,

THE FLINT HEART

Whose little eyes glow
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

II.

“No Will-o’-th’-Wispe mis-light thee,
Nor Snake, or Slow-worme bite thee,
But on, on thy way,
Not making a stay,
Since Ghost there’s none to affright thee.

III.

“Let not the darke thee cumber;
What though the Moon does slumber?
The Starres of the night
Will lend thee their light,
Like Tapers cleare without number.”

Charles was greatly pleased with this magic song, and he learned it quickly, and promised that he would teach it to Unity if he could. He did not forget to say that he thought De Quincey was a very fine singer; and indeed he was, though one might have better liked his singing, and all the other clever things that he did, had he not made such a fuss about them.

Then, full of the great deeds that awaited him, Charles started, and his mind was so busy with the matter of Marsh Galloper, the present rebellious Chief of the Jacky Toads, that he quite forgot he was still no more than fairy size. The fact, however, came unpleasantly into his mind, for a great kestrel-hawk, mistaking Charles for a mouse or lizard, swooped down from her high station where she was hovering on widespread wings aloft, and if Charles had not screamed the bird must certainly have fixed her sharp claws in him and carried him off for supper.

So he rushed back to the Holt as fast as he could go, and De Quincey, who had also remembered, and who was therefore waiting for him, reproved Charles rather sharply for his stupidity; then restored him to his natural size.

After which the boy set off home in real earnest; and that night he told Unity what they had to do; and the next morning they told the hot-water bottle. He was nervous, as usual, but left himself entirely in their hands.

CHAPTER XV

THE GALLOPER

Of course when dealing with a Jacky Toad, night is the time to choose; and so Unity and Charles had to arrange for a night excursion. They must first find Marsh Galloper; they both agreed about that; but what they were to do when they had found him looked to be a much more difficult question. Unity wondered if kindness would be any good, and the hot-water bottle also thought that they ought to try kindness first; but Charles felt pretty sure that kindness would be mere waste of time.

"He wants to abolish the Veto, and the King's Prime Minister won't let him," explained Charles. "I don't know what the Veto is, or why he wants to stop it, or why the King's Prime Minister won't let him; but it is

quite certain that the King has made up his mind; so when we do meet Marsh Galloper, the first thing will be to tell him so."

"We must break it to him gently," suggested the hot-water bottle. "I know, only too well, what disappointment means. If you take my advice, you will tell him that you are sorry to say that the Veto can't *quite* be done away with *yet*, but perhaps *presently*, if he'll be good and say he's sorry."

"No," answered Charles. "I sha'n't do that. I shall let him begin and see whether he is friendly to us or not."

"I wonder how we shall know him when we do see him?" said Unity.

"We sha'n't know him," declared Charles. "Only twice in my life have I ever seen a Jacky Toad dancing by night; and they all look alike. They come out in the bog on warm nights and jump up and down, like flies flitting over the water; and their lights are rather dim and strange—not so bright as a night-light and rather bluer."

"Are they dangerous?" asked the hot-water bottle.

"Of course," answered Charles. "If they weren't, there wouldn't be such a lot of trouble about them in Fairyland."

"Then I wish you'd go without me," said the bottle, "for I've got no nerve left for this sort of thing now."

"You must come," answered Charles firmly. "The Zagabog mentioned you. Besides, we shall sing the song that De Quincey gave me. I have taught it to Unity, and, if we sing it together, no doubt it will protect us all."

So, on the next dark warm night, Charles and Unity and the hot-water bottle set out to the great bogs where lived Marsh Galloper and his friends. It was rather a nasty place even in daylight, and the white cotton-grass grew there and the cross-leaved heather and water-crowfoot, and many other plants that like boggy places. But Charles knew it well, and Unity trusted Charles. Only the bottle was nervous, and as soon as his feet touched

the mud he asked to be carried; so Unity carried him.

Then they sang Robin Herrick's song; but at first it seemed that the song was not going to be of much use, for the adventure began rather badly.

Just as they had finished singing, no less than four Jacky Toads waved their lights in different parts of the bog. They were little tongues of dim flame, and they flickered up slowly, like a fire-balloon starting; and then they stopped and flickered down again. One lantern was nearer and more brilliant than the rest, and, forgetting the danger, Charles and Unity dashed forward together, and Charles said "Good evening, Mr. Jacky—"

But he got no farther than that, for suddenly he found himself going down, down into an icy-cold mire, and the mud gurgled and guggled and sucked at his legs as if it were alive, and the whole bog was shivering and chattering and shaking in a very uncanny and horrid manner. Charles got his arm round

Unity, and Unity held tight to the hot-water bottle, and in a few moments all three were safe—on a tussock of stout rushes, lifted above the quaking bog that had so nearly swallowed them. The bottle screamed with terror and clung so tightly to Unity that he nearly choked her; but the noise he made was trifling compared to the shrill and rude shout of laughter set up by the Jacky Toad.

It was sitting on the skull of a horse in the bog, and now it put down its lantern and held its sides and rocked about with merriment.

“Be gormed if I didn’t think I’d got the pair of ’e!” he shouted out. So Charles saw at once that he was an ignorant and vulgar Jacky Toad, and felt very angry to think that the little wretch had nearly tempted him and his precious sister, not to mention their invalid friend, into a dangerous and deadly quagmire, from which it might have been almost impossible to escape.

The Jacky Toad was a tiny and hideous monster, less than three inches high. He was

as black as a coal, as hairy as a spider, and his eyes looked like rubies. He had metallic blue wings, and Charles noticed that the glass of his lantern was also blue.

"Don't think," answered Charles, "that we are in the least afraid of you, because we are not. You're a little cruel coward to try and drown me and my sister."

"Ess fay," said the Jacky Toad. "You'd both a' bin drowned in another minute."

"Of course we should, and what I want to know is, why did you try to do it?"

"Blamed if I can tell ezacally," said the imp. "'Tis my business to get you humans into a mess in these here bogs."

"Then it's a horrid business, and you ought to know better," said Charles.

"I don't know nothing," answered the Jacky Toad. "Leastways nothing about you great creatures. I haven't been teached about humans."

"We never hurt you, did we?"

"Can't say as you did."

"We never spoke an unkind word about you, did we?"

"Not as I've heard tell on."

"I wonder you can be so wicked, then," cried Unity; and as the Jacky Toad had nothing to answer, he prepared to change the subject.

Before he could do so, however, an amazing thing happened, and the hot-water bottle began to twitter a song. It is well known that a great shock, such as dropping into a fortune or a Dartmoor bog, will quite change people; and poets, if this happens to them, often never compose another line; and common people, if it happens to them, often become poetical and spend the rest of their lives writing amazing verses, with rhymes and everything complete. And now the shock of falling into the bog acted in this interesting manner on the hot-water bottle, and he lifted up his voice and sang, just as he had sung when Charles and Unity first discovered him and took him home with them.

And here is the song that he made up. To



“ 'Tis my business to get you humans into a mess in these here bogs ”

sing a song right off like this is called improvising; and it is a very clever thing for anybody to do, but simply wonderful for a broken-down hot-water bottle, made in Germany and suffering from a terrible hole in his side:

“We were walking quite harmlessly by, wicked Jack—

My friend Charles and this lady and I—

When your horrible light

Lands us all in a plight,

And you ought to be slapped till you cry, wicked Jack,

For I'm sure we shall never be dry.

“Your expression is not of the best, wicked Jack,
And you do not appear to be dressed.

You may think it good fun

To behave as you've done;

But you'll sadly regret such a jest, wicked Jack,

If I get a bad cold on my chest!”

Charles and Unity were much pleased with this spirited song; but the Jacky Toad only put his tongue out and made faces at the hot-water bottle. He was not in the least touched by

the thought of a cold on the bottle's chest. And this was natural under the circumstances, because the Jacky Toad wore round his neck the Flint Heart—of course shrunk to fairy size.

Now it flashed in the blue light thrown by his lantern, and Charles saw it.

"Why, you're Marsh Galloper himself!" cried the boy; and the Jacky Toad admitted that it was so.

"That be my name for sartain, though how the mischief you found it out I can't tell," he answered.

"By that thing round your neck," answered Charles.

"I wonder if you wouldn't be happier without it?" asked Unity.

"No, no!" he answered. "'Tis a bit of magic, that is, and it's made me the King of Bog Land, and it'll make me the King of Fairyland before I part from it. That's the sort of chap I am."

"Treason!" said Charles. "You ought to have your head chopped off for talking like that."

"You can't do it," answered Marsh Galloper. "You can't chop a Jacky Toad's head off any more than you can chop his tail off."

"I understand that you want to abolish the Veto," said Charles.

"So I do," answered the imp; "but that's not all: I want to abolish everybody and be the top of everything; and I'm going to be."

He waved his lantern in circles and began to sing a song that he had heard the Moor men sing. But as it had nothing to do with the case, I need not put it down here.

Charles and Unity spoke aside together. They did not in the least know what to do. It was, in fact, left to the hot-water bottle to suggest a course of action. The bottle seemed possessed by a spirit of genius to-night. Not content with original verse, he now did an original thing. He screwed off his brass nose

with his own hand; then whispered so softly to Charles that the Jacky Toad could not overhear him.

"The Zagabog specially mentioned me, didn't he?" asked the bottle; and then he answered himself, as people who have thought of a splendid idea and are in a hurry to tell it, often do.

"Yes, he specially mentioned me; and now I know why! I alone can catch the Jacky Toad!"

"Catch him!" whispered back Charles. "D'you think we ought to catch him?"

"Certainly I do," replied the bottle. "That is the first step. He will not listen to reason while he is free."

"But how?" asked Charles.

"In this way. Take me and pop me over him! He cannot escape; because the Zagabog specially mentioned me. In fact, the only cage that will hold him tight is a hot-water bottle made in Germany. That's how I read the situation."

"We can but try," replied Charles, who was amazed at the sudden and unexpected bravery of his friend.

"I wonder if he'll bite you?" whispered Unity, and the bottle sighed his well-known sad sigh, like ginger-beer escaping.

"It will not be the first time that I have been bitten," he replied. "But I am doing this for the good of the cause—and for private reasons. Now waste no more time, or he may hop away and we shall lose him."

So Charles took the bottle in one hand and his brass nose in the other. He hoped to catch the Jacky toad by a sudden swift action, and then screw the bottle's brass nose back quickly. As for the hole in the bottle's side, that had been mended after a rough fashion with stamp-paper; but whether he would prove strong enough in his present feeble condition to make a prison for Marsh Galloper was a doubtful matter.

"Don't whisper," said the Galloper suddenly; "that's rude, if you like—a jolly sight worse

than me. What are your names, if I may ask?"

Charles humoured him and spoke as he crept a little nearer.

"My sister is called Unity and I am called Charles, and this—"

Here he broke off, made a fierce grab, and brought down the bottle with his India-rubber lips over the Jacky Toad. Everything worked well; the poor bottle was convulsed and shook and nearly doubled itself up with pain, for Marsh Galloper, finding himself caught, rushed about and flew and scratched and bit and kicked and screamed for his friend Fire Drake to save him, and said such wicked words, that Charles swiftly screwed on the bottle's brass nose, so that Unity should not hear them.

As for the hot-water bottle, he clasped his hands over his poor stomach and bore the pain of the Jacky Toad almost as bravely as you would bear the pain of a mustard-plaster if by bad luck you had to wear one.

"All for the good of the cause," he kept say-

ing; and this thought comforted his sorrow, as it has often comforted the sorrow of other great heroes.

So they caught the Jacky Toad, and then the three hurried home as fast as they could go with their prize. It seemed almost cruel to hang the bottle up on his usual nail and leave him with Marsh Galloper tearing about inside him, like an angry mouse in a trap; but there was nothing else to be done that night; and the bottle took it bravely and begged them to go to bed, but return as early as they could on the following morning.

So reluctantly they left him, jumping and swelling and throbbing and bulging, and nearly, but not quite, bursting under the savage attacks of Marsh Galloper.

And to the last they heard him saying, "It's all for the good of the cause; it's all for the good of the cause."

CHAPTER XVI

THE GALLOPER'S SCHOOLING

Charles was up very early to visit the stable where the bottle hung.

"Hush!" said the hot-water bottle, putting its finger to its lips; "don't wake him, for goodness' sake. I have had a truly dreadful night; in fact, I'm more dead than alive. At dawn, when the cocks began to crow, the monster grew quieter; and about the time your grown-up brother John came to fetch the horse he fell off to sleep. How long it will last, I can't say; and how long I shall last I can't say either."

In fact, the Jacky Toad had scratched and nibbled and gnawed and driven his red-hot nails into the victim all night long; but at last, quite worn out with his wicked exertions, he had dropped to sleep at dawn, so that he might

regain his strength and begin all over again when he woke up.

"The first thing," said Charles, "is to get the Flint Heart away from him; then we shall see what sort of person he really is. Nobody can tell till we take it from him. Now, bottle, if you're ready, I'll screw your nose off and pull him out."

"Then put on a pair of those ditcher's gloves that the men use. If you don't, he'll bite you to the bone," said the bottle.

But Marsh Galloper did no such thing. He tumbled out of the mouth of the bottle like a sleeping dormouse. Only, instead of being russet and soft and cuddly, he was black and hard and bristly. His eyes were shut and he had curled himself up quite tight and passed his tail twice round his body. In this attitude Marsh Galloper looked very much like a pickled walnut, and Charles had leisure to examine his tiny black feet and hands, his tail, with a claw at the end like a spider's foot, and the look of determination that sat on his grim and

dusky little face even in sleep. The Flint Heart, reduced to the size of a marsh asphodel seed-case, hung round his neck, and Charles removed it and returned the Jacky Toad to his prison. But he comforted the hot-water bottle as he did so.

"Be sure," said he, "that the thing won't bite and scratch as it used to. Nothing bites and scratches so badly when the Flint Heart is taken away from it. You may even find that Marsh Galloper is quite a pleasant person when he wakes up."

But the bottle doubted this.

"I don't think so," he answered. "And in any case I hope the fairies will richly reward me for all I've done."

"The least they can do is to mend you," said Charles. "And I feel very hopeful that they will, when I tell them how brave you have been."

"You put new life into me when you say that," answered the other. "I don't ask for impossibilities, remember. I don't expect

them to make me a new bottle. At my age, and after seeing the life I have seen, one is perfectly contented to be second-hand; and no sensible people think any the worse of one for that—we must all come to it; but if they would mend me and polish me up generally and make me water-tight and self-respecting—. However, I have no hesitation in saying that such a concatenation is too good to be true.”

While the bottle was using these absurdly long words, and rubbing his stomach gently as he did so, the Flint Heart began to grow to its usual size and Charles fell to wondering what he had better do with it.

“If you take my advice, you’ll fling it into the beech-wood,” said the bottle. “Nobody will find it there, and it will be soon covered up with leaves and forgotten. So Charles, very foolishly, did as he was bidden and hurled the Flint Heart into a thick wood that rose behind his father’s farm.

An hour later he set off as fast as he could for the Pixies’ Holt with his good news.

De Quincey's Secretary appeared to be expecting him, and when he arrived made use of the magic charm and reduced Charles to fairy size. Then he gave him a letter. It came from the fairy poet and ran as follows:

"My dear Charles,

"The good news of your performance last night has reached the Court this morning, and you will be glad to hear that the Jacky Toads, on losing their leader, have surrendered at discretion and begged for mercy. The King has decided to forgive them, and the royal Jacky Toad bodyguard has resumed its duties. But Marsh Galloper may not return. He will probably be deported, or thrust out of his native Bog Land for ever. This dreadful sentence should have been passed by the King an hour ago; but the Queen, whether wisely or unwisely I will not pretend to say, pleaded with His Majesty to think twice before signing the decree. It is now decided that Marsh Galloper be left in your hands for the space of a fortnight; and if, during that time, you and your sister can teach him a few things worth knowing and improve his character, his

language, his manners, and his political opinions, then he may perhaps be allowed to return to his friends. We much regret to hear by secret messenger that you flung away the Flint Heart again. No respectable bird, beast, fish, or other creature is safe until the *horrid thing* is destroyed. Do not suppose that you are doing any good by flinging it away. We shall hear of it again only too soon.

"I remain, my dear Charles, with kind remembrances to Unity and the dog Ship, your friend,

"DE QUINCEY."

"P. S. (1).—I have not attempted to introduce the magic of English prose into this letter, because I find myself in a great hurry this morning, and you wouldn't have appreciated it in any case.

"P. S. (2).—The King talks of making me an O.M. This is the greatest honour you can get in Fairyland, and is much better than being created a duke or an earl or anything of that kind. The letters O.M. stand for 'Observe Me!' and if I get them, I shall have them embroidered on all my coat tails. I hope you will remark them when next we meet."

"Mr. De Quincey seems as much pleased with himself as usual," said Charles; and the Secretary admitted that it was so.

"He's making a name fast," he answered, "and he's so busy running about in society and reciting his poems at public luncheons and charitable dinners, and so on, that he hasn't time to write any new ones."

"I'm glad to hear the King is going to turn him into an O.M.," said Charles.

And then, much to his surprise, the Secretary shut one eye and tapped his nose with his left forefinger.

"Bunkum!" said the Secretary, rather bitterly.

It was the first time that Charles had ever seen him show a spark of feeling.

Then he reversed the charm, and Charles went off home. He thought that the fairies might have called Marsh Galloper back and educated him themselves; but then he saw how great a compliment it was that such a business should have been left in his hands.

First Charles had to see what the pupil already knew; and the next thing was to see what Unity and he himself knew. He ran over his own information on the way home back to Merripit, and was rather depressed to find that it did not amount to much. And, of course, Unity knew less, being only five and a-half.

He and Unity had a long talk about it at the next opportunity, and she agreed with him that the first thing was to find out what the Jacky Toad himself knew.

They went to the stable and were astonished and pleased to find the bottle and Marsh Galloper in friendly conversation. In fact, an immense change had come over the Galloper. He was humble and contrite and ashamed. At first Charles thought he must be pretending; but this was not so. The Jacky Toad really felt sorry and, since the Flint Heart had been taken from him, he began to improve in every way.

So Unity got a mouse-trap, which Charles

half-filled with wet bog moss. Then he ordered Marsh Galloper into it, and the poor fellow obeyed at once, and listened to Charles while he made some remarks.

“The other Jacky Toads have all said they are sorry and have all been forgiven,” he explained; “and the King meant to deport you—which means that you would never have been allowed to go home again; but he has changed his mind, and if we can make you clever enough and improve you enough in a fortnight, you may be allowed to return home. But you will have to pass the examination.”

The Jacky Toad came out of his moss and showed great dismay and wrung both hands with grief.

“My poor wife!” he said.

“Dear me! have you got a wife?” asked Charles.

“A wife, but no family,” answered the Jacky Toad. “Us live under the root of a bog-bean, and my wife’s niece lives along with us, and

us never had no trouble till I picked up thicky dratted stone. Then I got a lot of nonsense in my noddle and went fighting the other pixies; and here I be—driven from my home and no hope of getting back seemingly.”

“There is hope, if you will set to work and learn all we can teach you,” said Charles.

“You can’t larn me nothing,” replied Marsh Galloper. “I’m a born fool, that’s what I be, else I wouldn’t be sitting here catched in a mouse-trap.”

“I wonder what you do know?” asked Unity.

“Nought—only a few things about the bog I lives in. That’s no good.”

Then the bottle spoke.

“You must know something about the Veto, at any rate,” he said; “because that’s what you went fighting for.”

“Good!” declared Charles. “He must know that.”

But the Jacky Toad didn’t.

“Be gormed if I can tell ’e,” he replied.

"You've got to fight for something, if you go fighting at all; so I fought for that. But what 'tis I haven't a notion."

"Then how did you find out there was such a thing?" asked Charles.

"From a newspaper," replied Marsh Galloper. "'Twas a newspaper by name of 'The Poor Man's Friend,' what one of they fishermen left by the river; and me and my friend Fire Drake was going that way and us found it; and Fire Drake's a bit of a scholar, and he read out '*Down with the Veto.*' So I thought us would shout the same."

"As you know nothing, we must begin at the beginning," declared Charles. "I shall teach you arithmetic and history and the Kings of Israel. My sister Unity will teach you sewing and worsted-work and poetry—as far as she has got herself."

"And I," said the hot-water bottle, "will give you lessons in geography, of which I know more than you might think."

"I wonder if you'll learn enough in a fort-

night?" asked Unity; and Marsh Galloper said he feared not.

"You'll get me purty well mazed among you," he answered. And the hot-water bottle admitted the truth of it.

"Yes, yes, I see a danger there," he said. "If we try to teach him too much, he will burst somewhere, as I did."

"I wonder what we'd better leave out?" asked Unity.

"Sewing," suggested Marsh Galloper.

"Anything else?" inquired Charles.

"The Kings of Israel," said Marsh Galloper. "I'll have a dash at the rest, though goodness knows whether my thinking parts will stand it."

It was arranged that lessons should begin on the following day. They found a large airy biscuit-tin for the Galloper to live in while he was being educated, and they gave him fresh bog-moss every second day, and half an old marmalade-jar of wet mud every evening. But two things troubled him: he could not light

his lantern and he could not write a letter to his wife. So they tried to cheer him up and told him that if he worked hard he would soon know enough to write to her. But this unfortunately did not comfort him in the least; because, as he explained, even if he did write to her she couldn't read it.

And here the chapter ends; but there is one small thing to mention before we go on, so I will say it at once, that we need not interfere with the next chapter.

The bottle about this time asked Charles and Unity a favour.

"Everything has a name," he said, "and I think I ought to have one also. I shall feel more important then."

They quite agreed with him, and asked him what he would like to be called.

"Something to remind me of the Fatherland," he answered. "Of course by 'the Fatherland' I mean Germany, where I was made. How would 'Potsdam' do?"

"No," said Charles; "I don't like the sound of it."

The bottle reflected.

"May I be called 'William,' then?" he asked.

"No," said Charles; "that's my father's name."

"How would 'Bismarck' do?" suggested the bottle.

And Charles agreed to do this, so in future Bismarck became his name. It was rather a large name for a humble hot-water bottle out of repair; but nobody was hurt, and I never heard that he brought any discredit upon it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EXAMINATION

I sha'n't tell you much about Marsh Galloper's schooling, because you know perfectly well what goes on at school and what uphill horrid work it is. And you cannot exactly say that Marsh Galloper was at school, because there were no other scholars. Of course it takes more than one Jacky Toad to make a school, just as it takes more than one swallow to make a summer, or more than one stump to make a wicket, or more than one currant to make a plum-cake. It would be more correct to say that the Galloper was at a "crammer's." Indeed, he had three crammers; and they crammed him with all their power, and night after night the poor fellow went to his wet moss with a splitting headache after plastering his forehead with fresh mud to cool it. And

if you had been there, with ears sharp enough, you might have heard him as he tossed about in his sleep saying, "London is the capital of France;" "Twice five are four; twice six are nine; twice seven are fifty-three." "Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was black as jet, and everywhere that Mary went the lamb you also met," and so on—which showed that he was learning steadily, but without much system.

All the teachers did their best, and as the time approached for the examination it was necessary to keep Marsh Galloper up with extra doses of liquid mud. Bismarck taught him by night; Charles gave his lessons in the afternoon, and Unity made him learn poetry and do worsted-work in the morning.

Then came the great and grand day of the examination, and Charles took the Galloper to the Pixies' Holt in an old tobacco-tin, and handed him over to some fairies who were waiting for him. Charles very much wanted to hear the result of the examination, and hoped that he would be able to take home the

good news that the Jacky Toad had passed and would be allowed to return home. So he sat down and waited quietly outside.

And while he waited a strange thing happened, for all the birds and beasts were bustling about in a most unusual manner, and it was quiet clear that something very much out of the common had taken place in the woods and on the Moor. At first Charles thought that all the beasts were coming to hear the examination; but this was not the case, for they had their own affairs to consider, and very serious affairs they were. He watched, and observed that there was evidently some method in the public excitement. They were collecting in groups; and what struck Charles as most extraordinary was how the creatures that usually quarrel at sight, or fight and wrangle at any rate, if they do not actually go farther and eat each other, were here together all friendly and all evidently busy about the same matter.

While he watched them, however, we must go with Marsh Galloper before the Examiner.

It was a solemn sight that met the Jacky Toad's eyes when he entered the Examination Hall. The main building had been divided down the middle, and on one side of the partition were the fairies to the number of two or three thousand; and on the other were all the Jacky Toads from Marsh Galloper's own particular swamp.

At the end of the hall was a raised platform with gold chairs and gold footstools for the King and Queen arranged upon it. There was also a blackboard for the marks that the Galloper might win. And there was also, of course, an Examiner Royal, and the Examiner Royal was De Quincey.

He had not yet been made an O.M.; but he hoped, after the examination of the Jacky Toad, that he would get this great honour at once. He wore a cap and gown, and looked more learned than usual.

Marsh Galloper was brought in, and bowed and scraped very humbly, and touched his forehead to everybody; and Mrs. Marsh Galloper,

who sat in the front row of the Jacky Toads, between her niece and Mrs. Fire Drake, cried out loud when she saw her husband, because he was looking so thin and wild and sad. She then asked if she might kiss him, to give him courage, but was not allowed to do so.

A chair having been placed for the pupil, De Quincey rose, hitched his gown about his shoulders—it was made of two dead beech-leaves—and lifted a terribly large bundle of papers from the table beside him.

“I beg to inform Your Majesties,” he began, “that we are here to inquire into the education of the late rebel Jacky Toad, known as Marsh Galloper. I have heard from the human boy Charles, that under the gentle application of arithmetic and history, geography and poetry, the Galloper has become wonderfully improved in his general character; and that, of course, is well as far as it goes. Where he was naughty, he is good; where he was rough, he is gentle; where he used to command,

he now obeys; and where he was accustomed to use very bad words, he now employs the best that he has been taught. But his fate does not depend upon these things. It depends on what he has learned; and if he passes the examination which now awaits him he will be allowed to return home to his wife, his relations, and his acquaintances; but if he fails, then he will be cast out—to be seen again among the people of the bog at his own peril.”

Everybody applauded De Quincey for putting the matter so clearly before them. Then he made a few more remarks.

“Our examination consists of arithmetic, history, geography, worsted-work, poetry, and general knowledge; and I propose, if Your Majesties are willing, to take the general-knowledge paper first.”

Unfortunately, the Jacky Toad’s weakest subject was general knowledge; because neither Charles nor Unity had any worth mentioning. So, of course, they couldn’t teach him. But

the bottle knew a thing or two, and Marsh Galloper determined at any rate to make the best of himself.

"My first question is this," began De Quincey, consulting his papers:

"What's a freemason?"

Every eye was turned on the Galloper, and the audience was not unfriendly to him. Nobody really much liked De Quincey—both because he was clever, and because he made such a fuss about it. But if you're an "intellectual," of course you must behave according, or people won't know it.

Marsh Galloper frowned and looked at the ceiling, and then at the windows, and then at his toes. Naturally he had not the ghost of a notion what a freemason was. At last he spoke.

"I can't tell 'e, because I doan't knaw," he said in his broad Devonshire.

"You don't know!—very good—or, I should say, very bad. Your Majesties, I ask you to

observe that the prisoner at the bar does not know what a freemason is."

"A free mason," said the King, indulgently to his people, "is a mason who has not joined his Trades Union. Now on we go."

De Quincey took a piece of chalk and wrote a big O on the blackboard. Then he asked the next question:

"What is a categorical imperative?"

"Never saw one; so I can't say," replied the student.

De Quincey shrugged his shoulders, and wrote up another big O.

The Jacky Toads all began to get anxious, and there was a good deal of whispering.

"You will observe, Your Majesties, that the prisoner has never seen a categorical imperative," said the Examiner; and the King, with his usual good-nature, explained it.

"They occur in the woods, with the other members of the fungi family, during October and November," he explained.

Everybody cheered, and De Quincey asked another question:

"Is the Moon or the Sun more important?"

"The Moon," answered Marsh Galloper instantly.

"Wrong," said the Examiner.

"The Moon's the most important to me," argued the Galloper.

"*You*—you're nobody," replied De Quincey.

"I'd soon show whether I was nobody if I got you in my bog!" replied the pupil warmly. Then the King spoke.

"Put up one mark to the prisoner," he said. "He was perfectly right to say 'The Moon,' because, from his Point of View, it *is* the more important. I must ask you all to remember what the dear Zagabog said on the subject of Points of View when last he dined with us."

So De Quincey put up a mark, though with very ill grace.

"We now proceed to arithmetic," said the Examiner. "And I should like to know the prisoner's opinion of five times six."

"Twenty-nine," said the Galloper.

"Wrong," answered De Quincey, and put up another big O.

But the King made him rub it out again.

"He was so very nearly right, that he may have full marks all but one," said the King.

The Jacky Toads cheered loudly, and De Quincey wrote up a 4.

"If you multiply three by four, and divide the result by two, and subtract one, and then add seven, and then multiply the total by twelve, what's the answer?" asked De Quincey.

Of course the Galloper had not the slightest idea, and no more had anybody else; but he felt that it was a case for making a shot, so he made one. He knew that twelve times twelve, which was the highest number he had reached, was one hundred and forty-four. So he thought that would do as well as anything, and said it.

"Right!" answered De Quincey, and put up five marks on the blackboard; but when the immense cheering had subsided, the King ordered

his Examiner Royal to write up a hundred marks.

"It is a perfectly magnificent answer, and I could not have replied more correctly myself," said the King. "So put up a hundred at once!"

Of course De Quincey had to obey; but as five was full marks, it rather muddled up his arrangements.

"There will be no more arithmetic," he said rather shortly. "I shall now proceed to history."

So he proceeded to history.

"My first question is, where did Julius Cæsar land?"

"At Plymouth," answered the Galloper. It was the only seaport that he knew.

"Wrong," replied De Quincey, and chalked up a big O.

"Wait!" said the King. "As a good Devon pixy, I ask if you are *quite* sure he is wrong?"

"Quite, Your Royal Highness," replied the Examiner. "It is believed that he landed at Deal."

“Well, *I* believe that he landed at Plymouth,” said the King. “He was a clever man, and he would never have made a mistake of that kind. Full marks for the Galloper!”

A cheer rewarded the King for this clever correction of history, and De Quincey chalked up five marks. But he didn’t like it.

“My second question occurs in the reign of William and Mary,” he continued. “What does the prisoner know of Mary?”

“‘Mary had a little lamb,’” replied Marsh Galloper instantly.

“That’s wrong, at any rate,” declared De Quincey. “You’re mixing up poetry with history.”

“Well,” said the King, “even if he is, he’s not the first person to do so.”

“Of course, if Your Majesty is satisfied—” replied the Examiner, with a shrug of his shoulders.

“Perfectly,” said the King. “And now let’s go on to something else. I never much cared

about history myself—except, of course, the history of my own kingdom.”

“We now come to worsted-work,” said the Examiner Royal; “and as I don’t pretend to know anything of that subject I must ask Your Majesty to call a jury of spinsters.”

“No need,” said the Queen suddenly. “I will decide that point.”

The Queen seldom spoke, but when she did she was always well worth hearing. Everybody clapped their hands, and the Galloper produced his performance. Under Unity’s direction he had worked a tiny sampler on a whortleberry-leaf. At each corner was a star with six points, and in the middle were the words “*Bless our Home.*”

The Queen examined the work carefully.

“A masterpiece,” she said; “I will keep it!”

“Her Majesty honours the Galloper by keeping his sampler for her own use. Treble marks!” announced the King.

When the applause had ceased, and Mrs. Marsh Galloper had been calmed down, for

she was growing quite hysterical with the strain, De Quincey took up the next paper.

“Geography,” he said shortly. In fact, he was getting shorter and shorter, and really he felt in rather a rage. But you can’t be in a rage before the King, or you will get into trouble; so he hid his feelings as well as he could.

“Geography is my own favourite subject,” declared His Majesty; “and a good deal will depend upon the answers to this paper.

But a thought struck the Queen.

“It is tea-time,” she said.

“Then the examination is suspended for half an hour,” replied the King.

He rose with the Queen, and they retired to their private apartments. A great clatter filled the Examination Hall, and some were hopeful for the Galloper, and some looked at the long row of big O’s and shook their heads. Everybody was still chattering when the King returned, and it was noticed that he had brought with him his own “Manual of Modern Geography.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE JACKY TOAD FAILS

"Our first question," began De Quincey, "belongs to the physical branch of the subject—namely, What is the size, in square miles, of the United States of America?"

The Galloper did not even make a shot at this terrific question.

"I doan't knaw at all," he said.

"Mark that, Your Majesty! He doesn't know *everything*, after all!" said De Quincey, rather unkindly.

"Of course he doesn't," answered the King. "Who does—excepting the Zagabog? Next question."

The Examiner marked up a big O, and proceeded.

"What is the difference between a peninsula and an isthmus?"

"That's a riddle," said the King. "I won't have riddles asked at a serious time like this. Next question."

"What is the difference—" began De Quincey again. But the King stopped him.

"I tell you I won't have it!" he said.

"What does the prisoner know of volcanoes, then?" continued the Examiner. He was feeling rather like a volcano himself by this time.

"An excellent question," said the King. "What does the prisoner know of volcanoes?"

Unfortunately Marsh Galloper knew nothing about them; the King frowned, and the hearts of all the Jacky Toads sank.

"For the benefit of my subjects in general, I may say that the extinct volcanoes are found generally on the mainland, while the active volcanoes, save one, occur on islands," continued the King. "Etna, at Sicily, is the largest in Europe for the moment. But you never know what may happen. Dartmoor was a volcano once. Proceed."

But I really cannot tell you much more about

the geography paper, because it is too painful. De Quincey kept asking questions, and the Galloper couldn't answer any of them, because the only geography that he knew had been taught him by the hot-water bottle, and it concerned nothing but Germany.

A fearful row of big O's appeared on the board, and at last the Galloper, in a voice of anguish, cried out:

"May it please Your Gracious Royal Majesty, let me ask *him* something for a change!"

"Ridiculous nonsense!" cried De Quincey. "What next, I should like to know? Who ever heard of a person who is being examined asking the Examiner a question? Such a thing never was known to happen, Your Majesty."

"Well," answered the King, "because a thing never happened, that's no reason why it never should. Let us be broad-minded and welcome novelties. It is quite too absurd to suppose that the prisoner, who has only been

learning geography for a fortnight, can ask you anything you don't know."

"Of course it is," answered De Quincey.

"Then let him go ahead!" ordered the King, and Marsh Galloper instantly began.

"What be the names of the six Grand Duchies of the German Empire?" he said.

"A capital question!" cried the King, opening his "Manual."

But De Quincey had not the slightest idea of the answer. He frowned, and coughed, and blew his nose, and curled his whiskers, and then laughed and said:

"What an extraordinary thing—if they haven't quite slipped out of my memory for the moment!"

"Ask him another," said the King.

"What do 'e know of Baden?" inquired the Galloper.

"Baden?" asked De Quincey, to gain time.

"Ess, Baden," answered the Jack Toad.

"Well, let me see—tut, tut! What a

memory I've got!" said the Examiner Royal. "On the tip of my tongue too!"

"So were the answers to all your questions on the tip of my tongue, I do assure 'e. But I couldn't manage to get 'em off!" said the Galloper.

"Since my Examiner Royal does not know anything about Baden, I may tell you all that it is the most important watering place in Germany," declared the King drily. "Ask him another."

"What are the tributaries of the Danube?" asked Marsh Galloper. "And what sea does it flow into?"

De Quincey thought he knew this, and so pretended it was an easy question.

"Every school fairy could answer that," he replied. "The tributaries of the Danube are the Moldau and the Eger."

"Wrong!" screamed the Galloper. "You're mixing it up with the Elbe."

"It's a pity you were so *eager* to reply," re-

marked the King; and there was a great shout of laughter.

But it was not wise to make public fun of a great poet pixy for long, and the King knew very well that anybody, no matter how clever, may be made to look foolish if one takes a little trouble to do it. So he announced that the geography examination was ended.

"The last subject is poetry," said De Quincey, quite humbly. "Is it Your Majesty's wish that I should examine the prisoner in poetry?"

"If you please," replied the King; and he added, with his usual tact and kindness: "We well know that on the subject of poetry you stand first in our kingdom."

De Quincey bowed at this delicate compliment, and the examination continued.

"In this case," said the Examiner, who had evidently profited by his sharp lesson, "the simplest plan will be—not to ask you what you don't know, but to find out what you do."

“Bravo!” cried the King. “The very essence of the Examiner’s art. Proceed.”

“Let us hear some poetry, please,” said De Quincey. “We do not expect anything very wonderful in a fortnight; but the great thing is to *understand* what you know, and not merely to repeat it like a parrot.”

Marsh Galloper put his paws behind him, and recited the nursery rhymes that Unity had taught him. All went pretty well, and he gained several good marks. There was, in fact, only one little breeze between the King and De Quincey, and it happened in this way. The Galloper had correctly recited several classical verses, and then he spoke as follows:

“Little Miss Muffet
She sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey,
When there came a great hornet
And played on his cornet
And frightened Miss Muffet away.”

“Wrong!” said De Quincey, and he was

going to put up a big O, when the King gently stopped him.

"You are quite right to say that he is wrong," began the King; "but perhaps, in actual practice, it would not much matter whether Miss Muffet was alarmed by a spider or a hornet. I mean that the result in either case is the same. Her terror and flight are the dramatic point of the poem, and whether it was the rudeness of a spider, sitting down beside her without an invitation, or the stupid practical joke of a hornet in suddenly sounding his cornet close to her ear, appears to me to matter but little. I confess that is how the situation strikes me, as an impartial observer; but if I am mistaken, please correct me."

"Your Majesty is perfectly correct," replied De Quincey. "I had not looked at it in that light. It is a variation of the classical version; but there may be authorities to support it. And, as you cleverly point out, the result to the heroine of the poem is the same. The

dreadful climax of her terror and flight remains."

"In any case," declared the Queen, "variety is charming."

"Go on," said the Examiner Royal.

"I don't know any more," replied Marsh Galloper; "but after Unity had taught me these, I made up a little bit of a rhyme myself. It ban't very clever, of course, but I just mention it to show how terrible hard I have tried."

"Repeat it," ordered the King, "and let nobody laugh."

So the prisoner recited these words:

"Shall I never see my own Marsh again,
And the hole by the old bog-bean?
Must I leave my wife behind,
Who was always good and kind?
Shall I never see my own Marsh again?

"Shall I never see my dear friends again,
And the skull of the old dead horse?
Shall I never wave my light,
So blue and queer and bright,
From the skull of the old dead horse?

“Shall I never suck the beautiful mud
That abounds at my little front door?
Shall I never hop and dance
And sing and leap and prance?
Shall I never see my Marsh any more?
“Shall I never——?”

Here the King stopped Marsh Galloper.

“Not another verse,” he said. “I couldn’t stand it. The poem is too pathetic. Not another verse.”

In fact, the King need not have ordered nobody to laugh. It would have been more to the point if he had ordered nobody to cry, for the Jacky Toad’s rhyme had brought tears to the eyes of many among the company. As for Mrs. Marsh Galloper, she cried so bitterly that her niece could not comfort her, and the Queen, who was also somewhat moved, sent the poor wife her own bottle of smelling-salts by one of the young princes.

“The form is crude,” declared De Quincey, “but the sentiment is haunting. It is real poetry and may have full marks. He chalked

up five for the Galloper's effort, and then spoke again:

"The Examination is now concluded, and I am about to count up the marks. The maximum is two thousand and seventy-five; the minimum is eighty. I much fear, when the big O's are added up and subtracted from the marks, that we shall find the prisoner has not succeeded."

A great silence fell on all the fairies and Jacky Toads, and presently De Quincey, after adding up the noughts and subtracting them from the marks, shook his head.

"Alas!" he said; and I think he was really rather sorry. "Seventy-eight noughts from one hundred and twenty marks leaves only forty-two marks. The prisoner has failed!"

A deep groan burst from Fire Drake and the Galloper's friends. His wife fainted and was carried into an ante-chamber; and the Galloper himself fell on his knees and lifted his clasped hands to the King, and fixed his ruby-red eyes on the royal countenance. Everybody re-

garded His Majesty with deep agitation. A few excitable fairies hissed the Examiner Royal; but of course he had only done his duty.

The King put up his double eyeglasses, and calmly looked at the blackboard whereon the figures appeared.

"Pardon me," he said, "and if I am wrong, correct me; but as I think it is you who are mistaken, I must humbly venture to correct you. Now let us see. In the first place, how many noughts have you there?"

"Seventy-eight, Your Majesty," replied the Examiner.

"Very good. Now, what do seventy-eight noughts come to?"

"Seventy-eight, Your Majesty."

"I beg your pardon," replied the King. "If I am not gravely in error, seventy-eight noughts come to nothing at all."

A loud shout ascended; but the King raised his hand for silence.

"Let us be strictly just," he continued.

"You will not deny that nought is nothing? That fact is known to everybody."

"You are misunderstanding me, Your Majesty," explained De Quincey. "However," he continued, using a phrase somewhat similar to that once employed by the great Dr. Johnson, "it is not for me to bandy figures with my Sovereign."

"Then," returned the King, "let us have a second opinion. I am always reasonable, I hope. Send for Charles!"

So De Quincey's Secretary went out, and found Charles fast asleep among the foxgloves. He had grown tired of watching the beasts, and weary of wondering what on earth they were all about. But when the Secretary woke him, he leapt to his feet and cried:

"Has he passed?"

"No," said the Secretary, "he has not. At least, my master says he hasn't; but the King isn't too pleased about it, and he wants another opinion. That's why he has sent for you."

Charles was reduced to fairy size, and ac-

accompanied the messenger as quickly as possible.

On the way he asked a question.

"Has De Quincey got the 'O.M.'?"

"No, he hasn't; but he very nearly got into a great mess," replied the Secretary. "How I did laugh! And I'm afraid he saw me laughing, so no doubt I shall catch it when the examination is over."

The King greeted Charles kindly.

"How do you do, my human boy?" he asked. "But indeed I need not inquire, for your cheek and your eyes are bright with the glow of health. Now, Mr. De Quincey and myself disagree about a question of figures, and it shows how even the simplest things are really difficult, just as the difficultest things are really simple. In one word, then, how much are seventy-eight noughts? Don't answer in a hurry. I think one thing; my Examiner Royal thinks another. We are both content to abide by your decision."

Charles considered, and a great silence fell on the company.

At last he spoke:

“Seventy-eight noughts are—nothing, Your Majesty.”

A roar of applause made the Examination Hall shake; but the King had his trumpets sounded for silence.

“Half the problem is now solved,” he proceeded; “but more remains behind. We have now to subtract the seventy-eight noughts from one hundred and twenty marks. You may make your calculations on the blackboard, if you think that would be easier.”

But Charles declared that he could do the second problem in his head, as he had done the first.

“Seventy-eight noughts are nothing. Subtract nothing from one hundred and twenty, and one hundred and twenty remains,” he said.

“But—but—” cried De Quincey, “each of these noughts signifies a bad mark. They are not *really* noughts.”

"I wonder you don't say they are crosses," said the King. "And if they are *not* noughts, what are they?"

"In my mind they stood for—" began De Quincey; but the King was quite worn out.

He stood up—a signal that the Examination was at an end.

"‘Life is real, life is earnest,’" he said, "and we cannot go into the question of why a nought isn't a nought in your poetic mind. At any rate, as the King of a great kingdom, I must not permit myself any of these fanciful dialects. Marsh Galloper has got one hundred and twenty marks; and, as the minimum was eighty, he has passed. He is, in fact, a free Jacky Toad. Release the prisoner, and tell him to be in my Audience Chamber at five o'clock to-morrow morning, to kiss hands in token of forgiveness."

Amid a great hubbub the Galloper joined his friends, and departed with his wife on his arm. The legions of the Jacky Toads shouted and screamed with delight, and Fire Drake ran on

before to hang up a few flowers and bright leaves about the hole by the bog-bean, so that his home might look festive and cheerful on his return to it. He also decorated the Galloper's favourite perch on the skull of the old dead horse.

The King then turned to Charles.

"If you like to take us as we are, without ceremony," he said, "Her Majesty and I shall be delighted to entertain you at dinner. Just the home party and some chamber music afterwards."

But Charles felt it would not be fair to Unity and Bismarck if he did this. He explained to the King, and assured him that the others would be terribly anxious to know whether Marsh Galloper had passed.

"Of course they will," admitted the King; "and as the credit is theirs also, we must have you all to visit us on some future occasion. I shall not forget. You may expect an invitation in a week or ten days. And I shall in the meantime consider whether some little appro-

priate distinction may not be dispensed to all three of you. Perhaps the fourth or fifth class of my Royal Titanian Order would meet the case."

So Charles, with many thanks, sped off, full of his great news.

But, excited though he was, he could not fail to note that things upon the Moor and in the woodlands were not as usual. Some places appeared to be entirely deserted, while in others the beasts had gathered together, and were evidently holding important meetings among themselves. Many were talking, and many were listening, and all were bothered and worried.

Charles wondered not a little what remarkable event could thus upset them; and not the beasts only, but the birds and reptiles and even the insects also.

He thought that Ship might probably know what was happening, and asked him as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. MELES

Needless to say that Unity and Bismarck were deeply delighted at the triumph of Marsh Galloper. Unity did not quite understand about the magnificence of the fifth class of the Titanian Order, but she was very pleased at the thought of visiting Fairyland again; while as for the bottle, he also much desired to go, for a practical reason, because he thought that if he could be thoroughly mended all over, it would be much more useful to him in his future career than any kind compliment from the King.

So they waited for the invitation to come; and I'm sorry to say that it did not. There was a reason for this, and, strangely enough, the person who told Charles the reason was Ship. They could understand each other now

since they had been in Fairyland together. You will remember that Charles had determined to inquire of Ship why all the beasts were so much worried and why they were collecting and having open-air meetings and so forth. Well, he did inquire, and Ship was able to explain.

“There’s a dickens of a row on,” said Ship in his rough-and-ready dog language. “And it’s all that cross-patch badger’s fault. The badger has been putting on a terrible deal of side lately and ordering people about, and insulting everybody, and making the woodpecker fly on errands for him, and eating the partridges’ eggs, and commanding the fox to go and live farther off, and standing on the bank of the river to make faces at the salmon, and frightening the young rabbits, and bullying the rooks, and growling at the water-voles, and goodness knows what else besides. He’s bitten the heron’s tail, and scratched the wild cat all over, and made the squirrel’s life a burden to it; while as for the mice and lizards and

newts and such small things, they can't dare to breathe the same air with the badger now. If he meets them, he orders them off and sets his children at them. He flies at everything as if he was mad. He says he will be obeyed, and he declares that the whole Moor belongs to him; and he's making the creatures all believe it."

"It sounds to me terribly as if he had found the Flint Heart," said Charles.

"That's exactly what he has done," answered Ship. "You flung it into the wood, and he was in there poking about after pignuts, and came upon it and took it home to amuse the children. But he very soon found out how strong and fierce and powerful it made him. And so he kept it; and he's getting stronger and fiercer every day; and he'll very soon be master of the Moor if something isn't done."

"Is that what all the beasts are meeting for?" asked Charles.

"Yes," answered Ship. "They have had fifty-seven meetings and appointed a committee;

and the committee, which consisted of the fox, the pheasant, the owl, the grass-snake, and the cockchafer, has decided on a deputation."

"I wonder what that is?" asked Unity.

"It is a solemn thing," explained Bismarck. "It consists of a number of people who come to some great person to tell him that a number of other people want something very much. And he listens most attentively to what they say and promises that he will think about it seriously. He thanks them ever so much for coming; and the deputation then withdraws—and that's generally all."

"The beasts intend to have a deputation almost at once," concluded Ship.

"What great man are they going to?" asked Charles.

"Not a great man," answered Ship. "They are going to the King of the Fairies; and they have given him notice that they are coming on Thursday fortnight. And the Public Hall in Fairyland is being got ready for them."

"That will be such a tremendous business

altogether, that no doubt the King can't invite Unity and you and me until he's seen them and got it off his mind," declared Charles to Bismarck.

So that explained the situation, and I'm afraid this is rather a short and uninteresting chapter; but it had to be written to show how things were with the creatures of the Moor and tell you that the badger, from being an amiable and really first-rate beast, had ruined himself by picking up the abominable Flint Heart. And I may as well end this chapter, and stretch it out a little, by explaining who the badger was, and where he lived, and what were his habits and pleasures and ways in general.

He was a member of the Plantigrade Carnivora; and if you want to know what that means, it is quite simple. He walked flat on the soles of his feet, as a bear walks, and he was not a vegetarian. In his palmy days he had been a quiet and thoroughly good beast, who never wanted to lord it over anybody,

and enjoyed life in a peaceable and contented manner. He fed on roots, beechnuts, blackberries, and occasional beetles. Sometimes he fancied a frog for a change, and when he fancied a frog he caught one and ate it. He came of a fine old family, and his ancestors had flourished among the very oldest mammals still living on the earth. But, until he found the Flint Heart, he never boasted about his race, but kept perfectly quiet and modest concerning it. He had, however, a perfect right to be proud; and none of you who read this story, even though your ancestors were being useful or troublesome here before William the Conqueror called, has anything like such a magnificently long descent as the badger. In person he was blackish and greyish, with two streaks of whitey-yellow along each of his cheeks. He had five toes on each foot, and at the ends of them were very powerful claws. He also had six inches of tail and very peculiar and wonderful jaws. These were so arranged that if he didn't want to let go of a thing when he

had got it between his teeth, he needn't. His eyes were small and set in a black streak of hair between the whitey-yellow ones. He was a modest beast until the Flint Heart spoiled him; but one or two things he did not know, and they were things that nobody with a kind heart or delicate feelings could have told him. For instance, he did not know that his hair was used for shaving-brushes and that his hind-legs were sometimes cured and turned into hams for breakfast. His family name was Meles, and he lived in a fine hole on Hartland Tor.

All had gone well with Mr. Meles until he found the Flint Heart; but now he wore the charm suspended round his neck, and his life, and opinions and intentions and ideas in general were terribly changed.

"I shall give nobody any peace until I am made the King of Beasts," he told his wife and children. "And I shall go on badgering everybody until they come and crown me and

admit that I am the most important of all creatures."

Mrs. Meles sniffed.

"My own impression is that they are going to do it," continued Mr. Meles, "for I see them collecting in groups and having large meetings every day. I expect them to arrive with the crown at any moment."

Mrs. Meles sighed behind her paw. She was feeling just as Mrs. Phutt had felt, and just as Mrs. Billy Jago had felt, and just as Mrs. Marsh Galloper had felt. And that showed that the Flint Heart was almost worse for the wives of the creatures who found it than for the unfortunate things themselves.

CHAPTER XX

THE DEPUTATION

The great day of the Deputation arrived, and it was the largest deputation on record. As a rule, a deputation does not exceed twenty or so, but this deputation was five hundred beasts strong and two hundred yards long. They marched in pairs, just as they went into the ark; but the processions were rather different, because everything walked into the ark (excepting the flea and his friends, who rode in), but the Deputation only consisted of Dartmoor beasts and creatures, and five hundred of these included examples of nearly everything worth mentioning.

De Quincey kindly dashed off a marching song for the Deputation; and to hear them singing it with one voice as they tramped forward by hill and dale, through streams and over

the tors, would have been a great adventure.

As for the song, it was nothing to such a poet as De Quincey, and he not only composed it, but also invented the tune one morning between the times of washing his face and brushing his hair. And that, as you know, is really no time at all. But the song belongs to this story, and you will be able better to picture the great procession of the beasts after you have read it.

The Marching Song.

I.

By your right, quick march, O creatures all!

By your right, go marching along,

And keep in time to the thundering rhyme

Of our wonderful marching song—song—song,

As we flutter, and we waddle, and we wriggle, and
we waggle, and we hop, and we skip, and we
glide,

And we hurry, and we skurry, and we paddle, and
we slither, and we creep, and we run, and we
slide!

Rattle, rattle, rattle, roll the kettles,

And bang, wang, bang! roars the drum,

And pom, pom, pom, bray the trumpets loud,
As through the Moor we come—come—come—
come.

Tootle, tootle, tootle, shriek the flutes,
And bang, wang, bang! roars the drum,
And clash, clash, clash, do the cymbals crash,
As through the Moor we come.

II.

Steady, beasts, steady! Don't make such a scrimmage;
Don't make such a scrimmage and row;

We're a solemn dep—u—ta—ti—on

To show the wide world how—how—how

We can flutter, and waddle, and can wriggle and
waggle, and can hop, and can skip, and can
glide.

And can hurry, and can skurry, and can paddle, and
can slither, and can creep, and can run, and
can slide.

Rattle, rattle, rattle, roll the kettles,

And bang, wang, bang! roars the drum,
And pom, pom, pom, bray the trumpets loud,
As through the Moor we come—come—come—
come.

Tootle, tootle, tootle, shriek the flutes,
And bang, wang, bang! roars the drum,

And clash, clash, clash, do the cymbals crash.
As through the Moor we come.

To this vigorous song, and keeping excellent time considering how different they all were, marched the five hundred upon Fairyland. They were not such grand and important animals as lived on the Moor once, in the days when Phutt and the New Stoners fired their flint-headed arrows and flung their flint-headed spears. The deer were gone and the bears, and the wolves had also retired from business. And I don't fancy such fierce and powerful people as the wolf and bear would have stood any nonsense from the badger, whether he had the Flint Heart or not.

But now came the dusky and flapping company of the bats, or flutter-mice as I prefer to call them. There were the Horse-shoe flutter-mouse and the Long-eared flutter-mouse, the rare Barbastelle flutter-mouse (there were only three of them) and the Noctule or Great flutter-mouse—the largest of them all. A company of common everyday—or, rather, every night

—sort of flitter-mice concluded this part of the procession.

Then walked six hedgehogs under their own banner with the famous hedgehog motto of “Prickly Does It.”

The moles came next, in shining velvet, and the shrews followed them—water-shrews and land-shrews both—singing with all their might and lifting up their little sharp noses into the air. And then walked about twenty fine foxes—dogs and vixens—with a number of neat little cubs trotting two by two behind them. There were some grand stout foxes here—regular “Dartmoor Greyhounds,” as sportsmen call them. Many had stood before hounds and, in their cinnamon coats with their great white-tipped brushes and black pads, they made a splendid sight. Their flags bore rather commonplace mottoes, though true ones—namely, “It is better to hunt than be hunted,” and “A goose on the back is worth two in the river.”

The rare pine-marten came next, and beside him walked another uncommon person—the

wild cat, still lame from his fight with the badger. And each was the last of his kind; and I am sorry to say they have both gone now.

The polecat followed just behind them, and he has gone now, too. Some rather unkind men killed him, for it is a curious thing that the rarer a creature is the more anxious some sort of people are to finish him off, instead of helping him along his lonely road.

The stoats and the weasels walked after—twenty-five of each. They didn't care a button for the badger, but they joined the other beasts out of friendship. Their motto is a good one for everybody—namely, "Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open." And if the lords of creation did that, the world would be quieter, and a great deal more useful work might be done in it.

The otters rather delayed the procession, because they would plump into every pool of water that they passed to cool themselves. There were a dozen of them, and they talked among themselves and didn't join in the singing—not

because they couldn't, but because they were selfish and wouldn't. Their banner bore the greedy words, "Salmon is Cheap To-day."

The squirrels followed after the otters. They frisked along and played the fool and kept losing their places in the song and singing too sharp. Their motto had been taken out of an old copy of the "Daily Chronicle" newspaper, left by a tourist on the Moor. It ran thus: "Eat nuts and live for ever!"

Then came the dormice and the harvest-mice and the meadow-mice, or field-mice as they are more often called, and then marched the Norway rat, and the rare old English black rat, and the field-vole and the water-vole. These creatures numbered fifty-eight of the deputation, and they all hopped along together and sang very fairly well.

The last of the quadrupeds, or four-footed people, were the rabbits and hares, who completed the first part of the procession. Their motto is not generally known, and they invented it themselves: "Wear fur all the year

round and laugh at the doctor." Which is a very good motto for them, and would suit me, too; but you might not like it. I may mention that the hares walked last. That was the place of honour, given to them because they were game.

Then came the birds, and this book is far too short even to tell you all their names; but every Dartmoor bird was there, and with their singing and hooting and croaking and booming, and chattering and cawing and twittering and chuckling, and squeaking and mewling and crowing and cooing, and gobbling and clucking and chirruping and quacking and cuckooing, they made the real music of the procession. The first idea among them was that they should walk according to their sizes, beginning with the smallest and working up to the biggest, like a school treat; but they decided that it would be more original and scientific to march according to their families, as arranged by learned men. So the thrushes and the missel-thrushes and the redwings and

fieldfares and blackbirds and ouzels and wheatears and chats and robins and warblers and golden-crested wrens and chiffchaffs and hedge-sparrows and such like, came first; and the dippers came second, all alone; and the tits and hicky-noddies came third; and the wag-tails and pipits came fourth; and the swallows and martins came fifth; and the finches and bramblings and linnets and buntings and such like, came sixth; and the starlings came seventh; and the jays and magpies and jackdaws and carrion crows and ravens—who are all no better than they ought to be, if not worse—came eighth; and the larks came ninth; and the swifts came tenth; and the woodpeckers eleventh; and the kingfishers twelfth; and the owls thirteenth; and the hawks—hobbies and kestrels and harriers and buzzards and peregrines and such like—fourteenth; and the pigeons fifteenth; and the curlews and plovers and dotterels sixteenth; and the partridges seventeenth; and the pheasants eighteenth; and the water-rails and land-

rails nineteenth; and the woodcocks and snipes and sanderlings and sandpipers came twentieth; and the cuckoos and nightjars and shrikes and nuthatches and herons and a hoopoe (who was only a visitor, but joined to see the fun), and many, many other birds, too numerous to mention, brought up the end of this part of the procession.

Next, in a select group by themselves, followed the reptiles—the grass-snakes and the lizards and the blindworms and the toads and the frogs and the efts, whose excellent motto waved above them: “Keep cool whatever happens.” The adder, you will notice, was not there. He wanted to come, but, in the first place, nobody trusted him; and in the second he was banished out of Fairyland for ever and a day for reasons we need not go into here. The “day” had long since passed, but the “ever” was still going on, and didn’t seem inclined to finish. So the adder stopped at home and said that he was on the badger’s side.

A few of the more important insects brought

up the end of the procession; and the dor-beetles and grasshoppers, the humble-bees and the busy bees, all helped largely with the music of the march.

Of course, the fish from the streams couldn't go. And that didn't matter, because they were not much interested. It is true the badger often stood on the banks and made faces at them; but neither trout nor salmon minded that as long as the badger kept on shore. Besides, they were arranging a little deputation of their own about the otters, who didn't keep on shore by any means, and were eating them so constantly that they began to feel rather anxious and worried.

So that was the Deputation, and they marched to the Pixies' Holt and entered in and arranged themselves on the rows of numbered chairs placed ready for them in the Public Hall.

And then the spokesmen of the deputation came to the front and stood in a row—for, of course, the whole five hundred couldn't speak.

When all was ready the trumpet sounded, and the King and Queen and Royal Family, and the Bodyguard of Jacky Toads, and the great Officers, and the Master of the Ceremonies, and the Gentlemen-in-Waiting, and the Ladies-in-Waiting all came in to hear what the Deputation had got to say for itself.

CHAPTER XXI

“SEND FOR CHARLES!”

The spokesmen were six in number, and they had been chosen with great care, because much depended upon them and the way they put the case to the King.

They chose the fox, because he was so clever.

They chose the hedgehog for his common sense.

They chose the heron, because he was a great speaker.

They chose the owl, because he was the wisest of all the birds.

They chose the frog, because he had a terrible private grievance against the badger.

They chose the dor-beetle, because he was an orphan.



The spokesmen for the deputation were six in number

The King nodded to his acquaintances among the creatures, shook hands with some personal friends, and bowed to the entire assembly. Then, having an excellent memory for faces as our own King, he noticed that an important beast was missing.

“Where’s the badger? Where is Mr. Meles?” he inquired.

“Well may you ask, Your Majesty,” replied the fox. “Where, indeed, is the badger? It is on the very subject of the badger that we five hundred beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects have come before you in a solemn deputation to-day.”

“Can it be possible that he has annoyed you all?” asked the King.

“Every blessed one of us, Your Majesty,” replied the hedgehog.

“How extraordinary!” said the King. “Why, I have known him for years, and a better-tempered, better-hearted, less cranky gentlemen I never wished to meet.”

"He has sadly changed, Your Majesty," replied the heron. "And we have to tell a dismal tale of his downfall and—"

"But, if Your Majesty pleases, you had better listen to the Deputation," interrupted the owl, who well knew what a terrible talker the heron was when he once got started.

"Of course," answered the King; "that's what I'm here for. Now begin."

Thereupon the fox stood up, arranged his notes, and opened the proceedings.

"The badger," he said, "has decided to become King of the Moor, and we have decided that he shall not be anything of the sort. He is by no means the kind of person to turn into a king. He is plain and ignorant. He is narrow-minded and no sportsman. He eats the partridges' eggs and uses exceedingly common language; he scratches and bites everybody, and behaves in a most unkingly manner. Instead of being king, he ought to be locked up. We are, in fact, sick and tired of his bluster and bullying and horrid ways,

and feel that something ought to be done.”

Then the fox sat down and the hedgehog stood up and said his say:

“As a practical beast, I know that the badger is doing a great deal of harm and unsettling the young people and filling their heads with nonsense. He wants them all to make him King, and, if they do, he has promised to divide the Moor among his followers. And as it isn't his to divide, but belongs to the little new Prince of Wales and several other important human beings, I object to this ridiculous way of going on and feel that something ought to be done.”

Then the hedgehog sat down, and the heron stood up and said his say—and a very long say it was:

“As representing the feathered legions of the air, I have to announce our rooted and fixed determination never, under any sort of temptation, to yield our allegiance to the badger. We owe him no thanks, we are not in his debt, and inasmuch as he has taken to

eating eggs it will appear to all beasts and birds assembled that the feathered legions of the air cannot be expected to gaze with a kindly eye on this ill-favoured and nocturnal creature."

Here the owl, who did not like the heron, interrupted.

"There is no objection to his being nocturnal; I am nocturnal myself," he said.

The heron merely looked shocked at being interrupted. Then he went on again:

"The question appears to me, and to the feathered legions of the air, in whose interest I now appear, to lie under seventeen heads or divisions; and I shall proceed to examine each of them, so that we may see how we stand and what course we ought to pursue."

"Pardon me," said the King. "It would give me great pleasure to hear you examine the seventeen heads of the question, but there really won't be time."

The heron bowed and tried, without success, to conceal his disappointment. He had hoped

to make a great impression; but the worst of him was that, though a fine talker, he always managed to be so deadly dull. Now he finished his speech, but dragged it out as long as he could:

“In that case, Your Majesty, I will content myself with saying that not only I, but those feathered legions of the air which I have the honour to represent on this occasion, feel that something ought to be done.”

The heron sat down and the owl stood up and said his say:

“Something *must* be done. It is a case for deeds, not words.”

This was a dig at the heron, and the King and Queen could not help smiling a little. But they applauded the fine brevity of the owl.

The owl sat down, and the frog, who was terribly anxious to be heard, said his say:

“If there is one person here who has more right than another to speak,” he began, “it is me.”

“Grammar!” whispered the lizard.

“Hang grammar!” replied the frog.
“There are things that lift a sensitive person far above grammar, and this is one of them. In a word, the badger has eaten both my grandmothers! My paternal grandmother was snapped up on Friday fortnight; and my maternal grandmother followed last Tuesday. Life is a farce; liberty a byword; peace is a dream, while the badger is thus allowed to eat just whoever he likes. Two kinder, gentler, harmlesser old ladies never had long families. And now they are gone. They have been taken from us by this abominable murderer. We shall never see a leg of them again. Nor is it any argument to answer that my grandmothers gave the wretch indigestion. The point is that he had not a shadow of excuse for eating either of them. Nobody is safe; death is let loose among us, and who can tell whose turn it may be next? In a word, something ought to be done; and if nobody else

will do anything, then I will risk following my grandmothers and tackle the badger myself!”

Which shows how much better people can speak if they are really interested in a subject than if they are merely keeping up their reputation for talk and haven't got their hearts in what they are saying.

All cheered the frog for his fine fighting speech, and there was not a dry eye among the reptiles when he sat down again.

After him the beetle seemed very tame. He mumbled something about being an orphan, and about having had to fly for his life from the badger on several occasions; but nobody paid much attention to him, for the Deputation wanted to hear what the King would say, and still more to know what he would do.

“There is little doubt—” began the King; then a curious noise at the main entrance caused him to break off and listen.

“There is little doubt—” he repeated; and

then the noise at the door increased. It was not often that people dared to make a noise when the King spoke, and he was naturally somewhat annoyed about it.

"There is little doubt—" he said for the third time; and then a regular din and hubbub quite silenced him. Several official fairies rushed to still the clamour.

"There is little doubt—" resumed the King; but now his speech ended altogether, for there was a violent rush from the entrance, the Jacky Toad guards were sent flying in every direction, and who should appear, in all his best clothes, but the badger himself!

"It's beastly of you all—simply beastly!" he cried out. "And I won't have it!"

He wore a tweed suit and a round bowler hat and a loud green and red tie. The Flint Heart dangled about his neck, as though it were an eyeglass. He carried an umbrella, and he waved it over his head in a very violent and impertinent manner.

"Take your hat off!" said the King. "How



“Take your hat off!” said the King

dare you make this vulgar noise when I'm speaking?"

"I didn't know you were speaking," answered the badger; "and I shall not take my hat off."

"Why?" asked the King.

"For the simple reason that I am a king myself," replied the badger. "One king doesn't take off his hat in the presence of another. We're equals."

"My dear Meles," replied the King. "You must be mad. How can a simple commoner suddenly blossom out into a King?"

"He can, when he's clever enough," replied the badger. "If you knew history—which you evidently don't—you'd jolly soon see that all sorts of people have become kings. You've only got to be man enough. What about Napoleon?"

"Remove his hat," said the King quietly, "and then I'll sentence him. This is no case for argument or conversation. A pretty king he would make!"

So a regiment of Jacky Toads rushed forward and surrounded the badger and knocked his hat off and took his umbrella away; and all the beasts shouted with indignation at him. Then some aged and learned fairies whispered to the King that he must give even a rude and blustering creature like the badger fair play before he sentenced him; and the King assured them that they need not fear he would forget his dignity. He then addressed the badger in these kingly words:

“I have no wish to be unreasonable or exercise my power in an unkind manner. I will content myself with explaining to you that you are wrong. Before anybody can become king over anybody else, one of two things must happen. The person must either be the proper King and follow some other member of a royal family to the throne in the ordinary way, or he must prove himself so brave and clever and wonderful and powerful that the people with one voice proclaim him King and invite

him to put on the crown, and even insist upon his doing so. Well, the other beasts have not the slightest wish to make you their King. They wouldn't have you for the world. They used to like you—as I did myself—but now they do not. In fact, they dislike you very much; and it is all your own fault, because, to tell you the honest truth, you are not really brave or clever or wonderful or powerful. You are merely a very badly behaved and ignorant badger, who has forgotten himself and his position, given a great deal of unnecessary trouble, and done a great many very wrong and foolish things.”

“Oh, shut up!” said the badger, and the King was so much astonished that he nearly fell off his throne. But he kept his temper even under this great insult.

“It is you who will be shut up,” he answered. “In fact, worse than that must happen to you. To interrupt the King is—well—really I don't know what it is.”

Then he turned to his Lord Chief Justice and told him to look into the matter and see what must be done.

The Lord Chief Justice wetted his thumb, for he was a self-made fairy, and turned over the pages of the Law.

Then he said a terrible thing:

“The sentence of the High Court is that anybody interrupting the Monarch shall be hanged, drawn, and quartered.”

“There now!” exclaimed the King, turning to the badger. “You see what you have done. You will be hanged, drawn, and quartered on the afternoon of Wednesday next. Now kindly go home, and let us hear no more of you until the time comes for the punishment. Then I shall expect you to be here punctually at half-past four for the hanging, drawing, and quartering. Be punctual, Meles, I say, or even worse things may happen to you.”

At this awful moment there was another scene near the door, and, before anybody could stop her, Mrs. Meles, with her four children,

rushed in. They hastened to the steps of the throne and knelt down in a row. After which Mrs. Meles began to talk.

It was difficult to understand what she said, because she talked so fast; and in any case she had, of course, come too late to save her husband.

Then everybody else began talking also; and some people, but only six, thought the sentence was rather too severe, and everybody else thought it was quite satisfactory, and, if anything, rather light.

Fortunately for the bad badger one of the six on his side happened to be very powerful. Of course, the other five wouldn't have counted, because they were his own wife and children. But the sixth was the Queen herself, so that made the matter a good deal more hopeful for him. However, against the Queen and the family of the badger were the five hundred beasts, birds, and reptiles, and the Jacky Toads, and the fairies in general, so the King found himself faced with one of the most dif-

ficult problems that he had been called upon to tackle for a very long time.

But he was equal to it.

After five minutes' deep thought, during which all the company kept silence, except the wicked badger himself, who whistled a stupid tune as loud as he could and stamped his feet and rattled his claws and pretended he didn't care a brass farthing for anybody, the King gave an order.

"Send for Charles!" he said in a clear and royal voice.

So they sent for Charles; and this saying of the King's became a sort of sly joke in Fairyland ever afterwards. If anybody upset a cup of tea, or broke his shoe-lace, or cut his finger, or lost a button, or overslept himself, or forgot a message, or took the wrong umbrella, or had neuralgia, or even hiccoughed, somebody always said, "Send for Charles!" But they took very good care that the King never heard about it, because the only gift of real importance this good and wise King lacked

was the power of seeing a joke. And when the King happens to be a sort of king who has not got a fine and large knack of seeing what a comical thing it is to be a king and, indeed, what a screamingly funny thing it is to be alive at all, then his people must be more careful than usual, and not only mind their P's and Q's, but all the other letters of the alphabet as well.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SENTENCE

While it occupied exactly no time for a fairy messenger to reach the ear of Charles and inform him that the King of Fairyland wanted him immediately, yet Charles, on his side, albeit he made the greatest haste, took half an hour to reach Pixies' Holt. But the time was passed quite pleasantly, for, at the King's direction, light refreshments were served to the entire company—excepting, of course, the badger, who had nothing. In addition to this piece of kindness, the Queen gave out that she was prepared to offer a prize of a thousand a year, and a mansion, and a ten-mouse-power motor-car, for the best Limerick on the badger.

She kindly consented to judge the competition herself, so papers and pencils were handed

round, and the fun began. Everybody thought the owl would win; but he didn't, and, as a matter of fact, he was not in the first three. Limericks were little in the owl's line, because his mind was too solemn.

The slow-worm, of all people, won; and that is the reason why, when you happen to see a slow-worm, he is always sleek and shining and prosperous. So he ought to be, with a thousand a year and a mansion, and a ten-mouse-power motor-car in the garage.

His Limerick was pretty good, though each one of the other competitors thought his own much better.

It ran as follows:

The badger is very ill bred,
For he stood on his hind-legs and said
He'd be king of the lot.
Now he finds that he's got
To be hung, drawn, and quartered instead.

The meadow-mouse came in second; but there was no second prize, so he only won the honor. However, he would be much pleased

to think I had mentioned his Limerick in this story, so I will set it down:

The badger would keep on his hat
Till the Jacky Toads squashed it quite flat;
But now, it is said,
He won't keep on his head;
So he can't get much change out of that.

When Charles arrived, the King put the case before him. I need not repeat His Majesty's remarks, because you know them already. The question for Charles to decide was whether the badger should or should not be hung, drawn, and quartered. The badger was still in a rude, boisterous frame of mind, and pretended he did not care. He had actually entered for the Limerick competition himself; but when the Queen read his attempt, she smiled to herself and tactfully tore it up; so it was lost.

"Well, Your Majesty," answered Charles, after considering the question carefully, "of course you know best, and I can see clearly that the badger has sadly changed, and he deserves

a very serious punishment; but, if it was me, I should only carry out part of the sentence."

"Which part?" inquired the King.

"I should not hang him," replied Charles.

"Why not?" asked the King.

"Because it would spoil his usefulness," said Charles, "and never give him a chance to turn over a new leaf."

"True," said the King.

"And I should not quarter him for the same reason," continued Charles; "but I should certainly draw him; because a badger can be drawn, and it often does him good and teaches him that he is not everybody."

"Capital advice," said the King. "He shall be drawn, and Charles shall draw him."

But Charles, with great politeness, explained that it is not boys' work, but dogs' work to draw a badger.

"I have a friend called Ship, Your Majesty. He was at the splendid party you gave to Mr. Zagabog. Well, he couldn't draw the badger himself, because it is not his business; but he

has two friends, called Flip and Chum. They are fox-terriers, Your Majesty, and they can both draw badgers. In fact, they are famous at it."

"Very good," said the King. "Let it be done. I can leave the matter with confidence in your hands."

Then he turned to the assembled beasts:

"The Deputation will be glad to hear that Charles and his friends Flip and Chum will draw the badger on Thursday next, at three-thirty of the clock. And now, my dear creatures, I have the honour to wish you all a very good evening!"

The King and Queen retired, and Charles spoke to the badger.

"I want your address, if you please," he said firmly.

"Will you have it now, or wait till you get it?" asked the badger in his rude and vulgar way.

"I'll have it now," answered Charles. Then he added: "I know quite well what's

the matter with you, badger, and I'm very sorry for you. And the quicker you let my friends draw you and get that hateful Flint Heart away from you, the better you'll feel."

"Never," said the badger; "the beast or boy who tries to take it from me shall feel my teeth and claws first. I'll tear him to pieces!"

He refused to give up his direction; but that didn't matter in the least, because the Deputation knew it perfectly well, and it was:

"The Badgeries,
Furzebank,
Granite Clitters,
Bellavista,
Hartland Tor,
Dartmoor."

Then the most successful Deputation on record went home, and Charles told Unity and Bismarck and Ship; and Ship went that same evening to see Flip and Chum and explain to them that they must be ready to draw a badger on the afternoon of Thursday next.

Flip was a neat and shapely lady terrier, with a few black patches about her and a little tan on her cheeks and over her eyes. No braver dog ever lived on Dartmoor, and when she heard the badger must be drawn she felt delighted.

"That's work worth doing," she said. "I'm simply sick and tired of killing rats; but a badger always means a fight."

Chum was a bigger dog—white all over, with a long, black, pointed nose, like a polar bear's. He was rather stout for active work, being self-indulgent in the matter of marrow-bones, though a grand dog in every other way.

"I shall have to go into training," he said, "or I shall be too fat to get into the badger's earth."

Then Flip and Chum went off together to plan the work, and they arranged rather a trying time for the badger.

As for the badger himself, he was not idle either. He prepared to make a terrible fight of it, and declared that the fox-terrier who

could draw him wasn't to be found in the world. So it promised to be a pretty tough battle; and when the great afternoon arrived, hundreds of beasts were already on the scene to see what should happen. They sat round in rings, as though it were a circus, and when Charles, Unity, Ship, Flip, and Chum appeared on the stroke of half-past three, all the beasts stood up, gave them three cheers, and wished them luck.

I may mention that Bismarck did not come. He had developed another nasty weakness in his left side, and was feeling sad and downhearted about things in general. He had been hoping and hoping and hoping for the invitation to reach him from Fairyland, and it had not done so. He feared, therefore, that it was forgotten, and that the King would no more remember all that he had done and suffered in the matter of Marsh Galloper. But, of course, he was quite wrong. The King had not forgotten. He merely happened to be unusually busy for the moment.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIGHT

The badger felt perfectly certain in his own mind that neither Flip, nor Chum, nor fifty such dogs would draw him; but he knew that there must be big fighting, so he sent his wife and family to her mother on the other side of the Moor, and told them not to come home till the evening. Mrs. Meles wanted to stop and help; but he refused to hear of it. He said that it would not be ladies' work, which was true; and he also said that he should undoubtedly kill both of the dogs when they came to draw him, which remained to be proved.

He settled himself at the very end of his earth, with the Flint Heart firmly tied round his neck; and in the darkness his eyes glimmered green, like two fairy railway-signals. His claws had been specially sharpened for the

occasion, but his teeth needed no particular preparation, because they were always sharp. And then came a great yelping and snuffling from the outside, and the dim light of the earth was darkened, and something began to scramble nearer and nearer. It was the valiant Flip, and her eyes shone red. She went through the hall, and the dining-room, and the drawing-room, and the nursery, and finally came face to face with the master of the house in his study.

“You insolent scoundrel!” began Mr. Meles. “How dare you—I say how *dare* you come into my house and trample about with your filthy paws, as if the place belonged to you? Be off, or I’ll tear you to ribbons!”

But Flip had not come to talk. She meant business. Behind her, in the hall, Chum was waiting. Unfortunately, despite his training, he was too stout to get farther into the badger’s house; therefore Flip had to get Mr. Meles all that distance single-handed—if possible. In a moment she saw the great size and fierceness

of the badger, and knew that it would be a heavy task, and understood that she must expect a few pretty deep bites and scratches, even if she escaped with her life. So, very wisely, she wasted not a moment in conversation; but just gave one tremendous growl by way of a battle-cry, and then dashed at the badger and set to work to grip hold of him and lug him out.

The audience heard a dull and muffled commotion underground; and Chum kept up frantic barks of encouragement to Flip; and Ship, who had to stop outside altogether, with half a dozen other big dogs, also barked and showed the wildest excitement and interest. But the struggle was so long that Charles and many of the beasts began to grow seriously alarmed. Because, if Flip and Chum between them couldn't draw the badger, what would happen next?

The fight was really dreadful. The badger tore and scratched and clawed and snapped and tugged; Flip bit and worried and gripped

and snarled and pulled. Fur flew off both creatures, and both were nearly choked in the fury of the battle. Now Flip dragged Mr. Meles into the drawing-room; now Mr. Meles made a tremendous effort, and got back to his study again. The ceiling came down presently and nearly smothered them both; but it forced them out of the study once for all, and that was so much ground gained for Flip. Poor Mrs. Meles would have cried to see her little drawing-room after the fight had raged there for five minutes more.

And still the battle went on, and Flip was growing weak from loss of blood, and the badger found himself rather feeble too. But I don't think he would have been beaten save for his enemy's cleverness. Now Flip, in a very artful manner, pretended that she had had enough of it, and everybody outside began greatly to fear for her, because she set up a fearful yelping and a howling as if the badger was eating her alive. But really this was a trap; and when Flip started to crawl away, as

though trying to escape, the badger, proud of his great victory, followed her to the hall, intending to give the defeated enemy a parting bite on the nose. Instead, however, he got a bite himself; and it was not the sort of bite to do you much good at the end of a long and fierce battle. Before Mr. Meles could get back to the drawing-room he had run against Chum, and, in a second, Chum's powerful jaws had closed like a rat-trap on the badger's right ear. Then Flip, who knew exactly what would happen, got a good firm hold of the badger's left ear, and before he had time to say "Jack Robinson!" he was trundled out of his house—tail over head, upside down, and nearly inside out as well. And when he arrived in the open air, the poor fellow looked a good deal more like an old worn-out doormat than the great and important Mr. Meles.

The beasts rushed yelling, and flew screaming to the spot, and it was all that Charles could do to stay them. But Ship and the big dogs acted as policemen and kept them off,

while Charles did what he could for the combatants. First he looked after Flip, who was in rather a bad way and very weak, and so beaten and exhausted that she rolled over on her side and could not move for half an hour. But the badger was even worse; in fact, he fainted as soon as Flip and Chum let go of him. Then Charles did two things, both of which showed that he had brains in his head and knew how to use them. First he sent the wood-pigeon for Mrs. Meles, because he thought that if the badger was going to die she ought to be there to say "good-bye" to him; and next he took his knife and cut the string and removed the Flint Heart from the badger's neck.

He then addressed the beasts, and assured them that the badger was cured, and that if he lived, he would never want to be King again; and he told Ship to look after Flip; and he directed Unity to tell Flip's master that the brave little dog was to be fed on beefsteaks for a month, in order to restore her strength. And

then Charles knowing only too well that the hateful Heart was beginning to do its work, set off to run as fast as his legs would carry him to the Pixies' Holt. For he determined to make no more trouble with the abominable charm, but hand it over to the fairies once and for all.

After he had gone the badger began to feel better. He opened his eyes feebly and said:

"What's happened? Where's my dear wife?"

And they told him that she had been sent for and that he had better not talk, but lie quiet. They brought him water in a dock-leaf, and he drank, and sat up and sighed four times, and felt himself all over; then he tried to wash his face, and began combing his whiskers feebly.

He appeared to be in a dream, and apparently had not the faintest idea of the things that were going on.

"What has occurred?" he asked presently. "Who's been treating me like this?"

"You've been drawn," explained Chum. "My friend Flip has just drawn you—with a little help from me."

"But why?" asked Mr. Meles; "what on earth have I done to be drawn? A badger's holt is his castle. You were quite out of order to do it."

"You had to be drawn," explained a partridge. "It was your punishment. You've been behaving horribly, bullying everyone you've met, and you know it. Didn't you eat my eggs?"

"Eat your eggs! Good gracious, no!" cried the badger.

"Didn't you send me on your errands?" asked the woodpecker.

"Never! I go my own errands—such as they are."

"Didn't you tell me to live farther off?" inquired the fox.

"Good powers! No, of course not. I was only too proud to be allowed to reside in the same terrace with you!"

“Didn’t you say that you meant to be King of us all?” asked the fox again.

“King—King—*me* King!” stuttered the badger; and, weak and shattered though he was, the idea evidently struck him as so wildly absurd that he laughed till he cried; and the tears made his bitten face smart most painfully.

They calmed him down so that he felt distinctly better before his wife returned. And really little more could be said against him, for it was clear that he did not realise in the least what a dreadful show he had been making of himself.

And when he was recovered, he insisted on going round to all the beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects, and apologising to every one of them personally; and he sent a letter of contrition to the trout and salmon also. He could do no more than that, and of course everybody forgave him—except the frog, who, I am sorry to say, never would, and quite forgot his own motto of “Keep cool whatever happens.”

Then the badger also went to Fairyland and had an audience and expressed his humblest and deepest regret at the past. So the King pardoned him, and kept him to tea; which was the proudest moment of the poor badger's life and closed the incident.

But we must return to Charles, who ran without stopping to the Pixies' Holt and soon made known his great news. He cast the Flint Heart down before the King and refused to touch it; and the King, who was rather scientific, sent for his learned men and had the Flint Heart arranged in a bell-glass. Then they exhausted the air with an air-pump; and so the charm lay safe in a vacuum for the present. There, of course, it could do no harm to anybody; but the problem before Fairyland was what step to take next.

"You see," explained the King, "the difficulty is really very great, because, do what we will, somebody may have to suffer. If we throw the charm into the air a bird will get it, and there will be trouble among 'the feathered

legions of the air,' as the heron so grandly called them; if we fling it into the river a salmon will get it, and, between ourselves, the salmon think quite highly enough of themselves as it is. It has got about among them that they are fetching three shillings a pound, and they are making rather a needless fuss in consequence, being ignorant of the laws that govern supply and demand. Again, if we fling the stone on to the earth we shall have some fresh trouble among the beasts; and if we leave it here, soon or later some fairy will be sure to get hold of it, because nature abhors a vacuum, and she won't allow us to keep even the Flint Heart in a vacuum for more than a certain time. Therefore the question is, 'What shall we do with it?' "

Before anybody could make a reply, there came a messenger to the King.

"May it please Your Majesty," he said, "the human girl Unity, and the hot-water bottle, Bismarck, are at the door, and Unity wonders

whether they may come in. They followed Charles, and bring the latest news."

"Let them enter," replied the King. "I have long wanted to meet the hot-water bottle, and he may be presented at once. As for Unity, woman's wit, as I have remarked on former occasions, will often solve a knotty problem when the profounder male mind utterly fails to do so."

Therefore Unity and Bismarck entered the presence. She had picked him up on her way, and they had hurried after Charles, hoping to catch her brother before he got to the Pixies' Holt, to tell him the good news, that Mr. Meles was better and that Flip also had almost recovered at the promise of thirty beefsteaks.

CHAPTER XXIV

A MESSAGE FROM THE ZAGABOG

The King welcomed the visitors kindly and was concerned to hear of the bottle's bad health. In fact, he sent immediately for five of the Court Physicians, and the bottle retired with them to be examined while other business went on. Charles and his sister were naturally rather anxious about Bismarck; but Unity had to think of the problem before the King; for His Majesty explained the situation all over again on her account; and then he asked her if any idea of importance occurred to her mind.

"In a word," concluded the King, "the Heart is a danger to Society, and I confess that I can't for the moment see how on earth, or under water, or in sky, to deal with the matter."

Unity put her finger in her mouth and frowned, which she always did when she had to think of anything difficult. Then, after a silence of at least ten seconds, she said:

"I wonder what the dear Zagabog would do?"

Everybody looked at the King and, when they saw him smile, they heartily and loudly applauded Unity.

"Woman's wit," began the King, "has once more conquered a difficult situation. To wonder in Fairyland is to know. We will hear what the good Zagabog would do. Set the wireless telegraphy at work instantly. The Zagabog is on the Riviera—no distance at all. Inform him that the Flint Heart has been captured after a struggle; that it is at present confined in a vacuum, and that the King of Fairyland wants to learn exactly what he shall do with it."

The King then looked at his watch.

"It is now fifteen to six," he said. "We shall get the answer at fifteen to seven, if not

sooner. We will pass the time with a charade or two and a cold collation."

So the message was sent and the charades were acted and the cold collation was eaten; and then there came a bright and happy event for Charles and Unity, and indeed for everybody. The doors of the royal consulting room were thrown open and the five royal physicians marched out, playing a rather charming little polka on their stethoscopes. And in the midst, radiant and gay and perfectly well, from his bright brass nose to the points of his toes, tripped the hot-water bottle. He had become a different person altogether, and instead of being limp and forlorn, and dejected and full of holes, and an object of pity to the kind observer, he was grown prosperous, stout, handsome, sound, and as good as anybody. His flat face was wreathed in smiles. He walked with a light and elastic tread. He shone all over, and his nose glittered like a star on a frosty night.



In the midst tripped the hot-water bottle

Charles and Unity hardly knew him, and now he was so excited that he danced and threw a somersault or two, and could scarcely contain himself for delight. He gave each a hand and kissed Unity warmly, for warmth was always his strong point.

Then the Senior Physician explained that he and his companions had swiftly discovered exactly what was wrong with the hot-water bottle, and that they had cured him while he waited. In fact, as Bismarck said himself, he was now as good as new, if not actually better.

The King held a conversation with him, and was much interested at hearing his adventures and his manner of life. He inquired what the bottle's future plans might be and Bismarck said that he had never given them a thought because he considered that his career was as good as ended. It quite upset all his ideas to find himself hale and hearty and thoroughly well again and "fit for honest work." He said:

"I am fond of work, Your Majesty, and never so happy as when comforting somebody on a cold night."

Then a happy thought struck the King.

"You shall stay with me," he exclaimed. "In fact, as the weather is a thought chilly for the time of the year, you shall come to bed with Her Majesty and myself this very night!"

And the bottle was so overpowered that he broke into verse, as he always did in the great moments of his life. For just think what a splendid fortune had overtaken him! One moment he was a poor broken-down invalid, full of holes and misery, hanging by his handle on a nail in a stable; and the next he was cured by fairy physic, and not only found himself in splendid trim again, but actually invited to sleep with the King and Queen.

Well might he make poetry!

Even his voice had much improved, and he purred with shrill clear accents, as the kettle purrs when the spirit-lamp is lighted under it at tea-time:

“Sing hey! and sing ho! for the jolly hot bottle
So soft and so plump and so kind and so warm;
Let the water be boiling right up to his throttle
And he'll cuddle by you and keep you from
harm.

Sure the King and the Queen
Will forget all their woes
When the jolly hot bottle
Is tickling their toes!

“Sing hey! and sing ho! for the bottle so knowing,
So genial and friendly whatever betide;
With him for a bedfellow you will be glowing
And warm as a toast though it's freezing out-
side.

Sure the King and the Queen
Will forgive all their foes
When the jolly hot bottle
Is tickling their toes!”

After this capital song, the bottle was led away by the Gentleman of the Bedchamber, to explain to them how his nose screwed off, and other things that it was necessary for them to know; and just as he marched away at one door, after taking an affectionate farewell of Charles and Unity, there entered at another the wireless-telegraph boy with a long message

from the Zagabog. And it would have cost a great deal to send had not the King, with his usual thought for other people, arranged that it should be prepaid.

The herald opened it and read it to the Court. And it was rather fortunate that Charles and Unity had stopped to hear it, because they were both mentioned.

Thus ran the message:

“Hotel Royal, San Remo.

“To the King’s Excellent Majesty, from his faithful friend and admirer, the Zagabog.

“In order safely and harmlessly to destroy the charm known as the Flint Heart, take one human boy—the boy called Charles—and one human girl—the girl called Unity. Choose a fine Friday morning before dawn and bid Unity bear the Flint Heart in her pinafore to the ‘Cuckoo Rock,’ where my friend the cuckoo always sits to rest when he arrives on Dartmoor for his summer holiday. Then direct Charles to bring the road-mender’s biggest hammer and strike the Flint Heart thrice. It will instantly become dust. Next the King

of Fairyland must fling one pinch into the air; the Queen must fling one pinch into the water; the Lord High Chancellor must fling one pinch upon the earth. All creatures at any time interested in the Flint Heart shall be present at the ceremony and, afterward, the Dawn Wind will sing his song, and the sun will rise, and everybody must go home again to breakfast.

"Hoping this will find the King and Queen of Fairyland as it leaves me at present, I remain, their true friend,

"THE ONLY AND ORIGINAL ZAGABOG."

"P. S.—The Snick sends his love and respects."

"To-morrow will be Friday," said the King, "so why waste a week? Let my commands be sent out instantly for the 'Cuckoo Rock' before dawn. Unity will bring the Flint Heart in her pinafore, and Charles will bring the road-mender's biggest hammer; and his father, Mr. Billy Jago, must also be present."

Then the meeting broke up, and Charles and Unity went home with the Flint Heart, which

was taken from under the bell-glass by a fairy of science with a pair of magic tongs.

And the remarkable thing is that, though Unity carried the Flint Heart, she continued just the same little wondering, white, ragged robin of a Unity as ever; and the charm did not make her the least bit worse than usual. Which shows one of two things: either that the Flint Heart knew what was going to happen and began to get frightened and lose its power, or else that Unity's own little heart was too sweet and precious and altogether lovely to be troubled by the naughty charm.

CHAPTER XXV

“GOOD-BYE, FLINT HEART!”

The cocks began to crow at four o'clock next morning, for they seemed to understand, like everybody else, that rather an important thing was going to happen; and the cuckoo, who was late in leaving Dartmoor that year, had just settled himself at the top of his own special stone, to have a final look round, when he found that beasts and fairies and other people were approaching in all directions. So, being a shy bird and not liking company, he went off there and then and didn't stop flying till he arrived in France.

The folk from Merripit Farm arrived first: Billy Jago and John, who was grown up, and Mary and Teddy and Frank and Sarah and Jane and the baby, and, lastly, Charles, carrying the road-mender's largest hammer, which was

a very heavy one, and Unity with her pinafore held out in front of her and the Flint Heart upon it. Next came the beasts of importance, and, of course, the badger; and nobody was more interested in this ceremony than he was. Indeed, when he saw the Flint Heart he bristled all over and would like to have ground it into powder himself. Ship, Flip, and Chum also arrived; and then came the regiments of the Jacky Toads, with Marsh Galloper and his wife and his wife's niece; Fire Drake and his wife; and many other important members of the clan. Next appeared the Fairy King and Queen with the royal family and the hot-water bottle, the Lord High Chancellor, and the other high officers of the Court, including, of course, De Quincey, Hans Andersen the story-teller, the heralds, the chorus, and the band. Ten thousand fairies followed; because the King dearly loved a great pageant and liked a crowd to see it.

But others had yet to come, for when the company was grouped about the "Cuckoo

Rock” two dim stern shapes grew out of the morning light and stood huge above the stone where lay the Flint Heart. They were greater than any of those present, and you could see the sunrise through them, for they were spirits from Shadow-land. One was Phutt, the terrible chief of the Grimspound clan in the far-off New Stone days, when the Flint Heart set out upon its romantic career; and the other was that mighty magician Fum, who made the Flint Heart at his mystery-shop beside the river.

And, vaster still, towering into the dawn, touched with the wild glory of dayspring, ascended two enormous and majestic figures above the ring of the tors and high into the sky. These, indeed, might easily have been mistaken for gigantic purple clouds, fledged and fluted with gold and scarlet along their peaks and precipices, and crowned with the herald banners that shot to the zenith of the sky from the coming of the sun; but really they were not clouds at all, and the fairies, and

those who understand the truth about things, knew very well who they were. And so did Unity, for she waved her sun-bonnet and kissed her hand and cried:

"I wonder where the darling Zagabog gets his lovely clothes!"

And the King said:

"He gets them from the sun every morning, for, like myself, he never wears the same suit twice; and, as you will observe, they are a perfect fit."

Indeed, the two great glorious objects, towering like pillars on either side of the eastern sky, were the Zagabog and his friend the Thunder Spirit, clad in their very best. They were both much interested in the ceremony, and the Thunder Spirit even forgot to laugh; which was a good thing, because if he had done so he must have spoiled the music and alarmed many of the company.

Then came the solemn moment when the Flint Heart was to be changed and administered in small doses to earth and air and



Charles struck the Flint Heart three times

water. Charles struck him three times, and at the third blow, behold! a little pile of grey dust took the place of the glittering, hard, black, flint stone. And then the King took the first pinch and flung it into the air, and the birds gave a mighty sneeze; and the Queen took a pinch and flung it into the river, and the fish became immensely excited and dashed about as though a freshet was coming; and the Lord High Chancellor took the last pinch and flung it upon the earth, and the beasts coughed and snorted. But the effect upon all the creatures was the same: the dust of the Flint Heart braced them up, made them brisk and cheerful, and acted like a tonic upon every one of them, whether they wore fins or fur or feathers; whether they breathed water or air.

And that is the real grand reason why Dartmoor is so stinging and bracing, and puts such life into you, and makes you feel so hungry and so jolly. That is why Dartmoor water is so foaming and refreshing, so cold and brisk; and why Dartmoor earth is so tough and elastic

and springy that you can walk or run all day upon it, and never grow tired. There is a touch of the Flint Heart still about Dartmoor, and the people who live there need it, I assure you; for you must be pretty hard and strong and ready for anything up among the high tors and heather, especially when winter comes and the great North Wind spreads his snowy wings and the East Wind shows his teeth there.

But it was the gentle Dawn Wind that now ended this ceremony, as the Zagabog had promised.

A great silence followed after the last pinch of the Flint Heart had been scattered over the earth and all the beasts had cleared their throats.

Then from the sky there came a murmur of music, wild and soft, and the Dawn Wind sang:

“Wind of the Dawn am I, and only She
Who knows the music of all secret song

Shall read my whisper murmuring along
Melodiously.

“Melodiously toward another morn,
Gleaning of silver dew upon my way,
I fly from darkness to the young glad day
Soon to be born.

“Out of the East she comes, and I rejoice,
And, breaking from the fainting hold of night,
Leap like a giant to her bosom bright
With organ voice.

“Lo! where the misty, rosy magic lands
Bud into gold along each wakened lea,
The Fairies of the Morning welcome me
And clap their hands!”

And the fairies did welcome him, though they had not the faintest idea what he was singing about; but they were glad because the Dawn Wind was glad, and they watched him sweep away, with the Zagabog and the Thunder Spirit, through the wonderful Gates of the Morning.

Then everybody went home with good heart and good appetite.

Which ends the story, and I am sorry that it is finished.

But if it takes you to Dartmoor next summer that will be well; and when you do go, may the Fairies of the Morning welcome you also, and bring new laughter to your lips, new light to your eyes, and also joy to the young hearts of you all.

THE END

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